WHIZZARD

WHIZZARD Interviews:
Marshall Rogers
Craig Russell
Tim Conrad
Steve Gerber
Don McGregor

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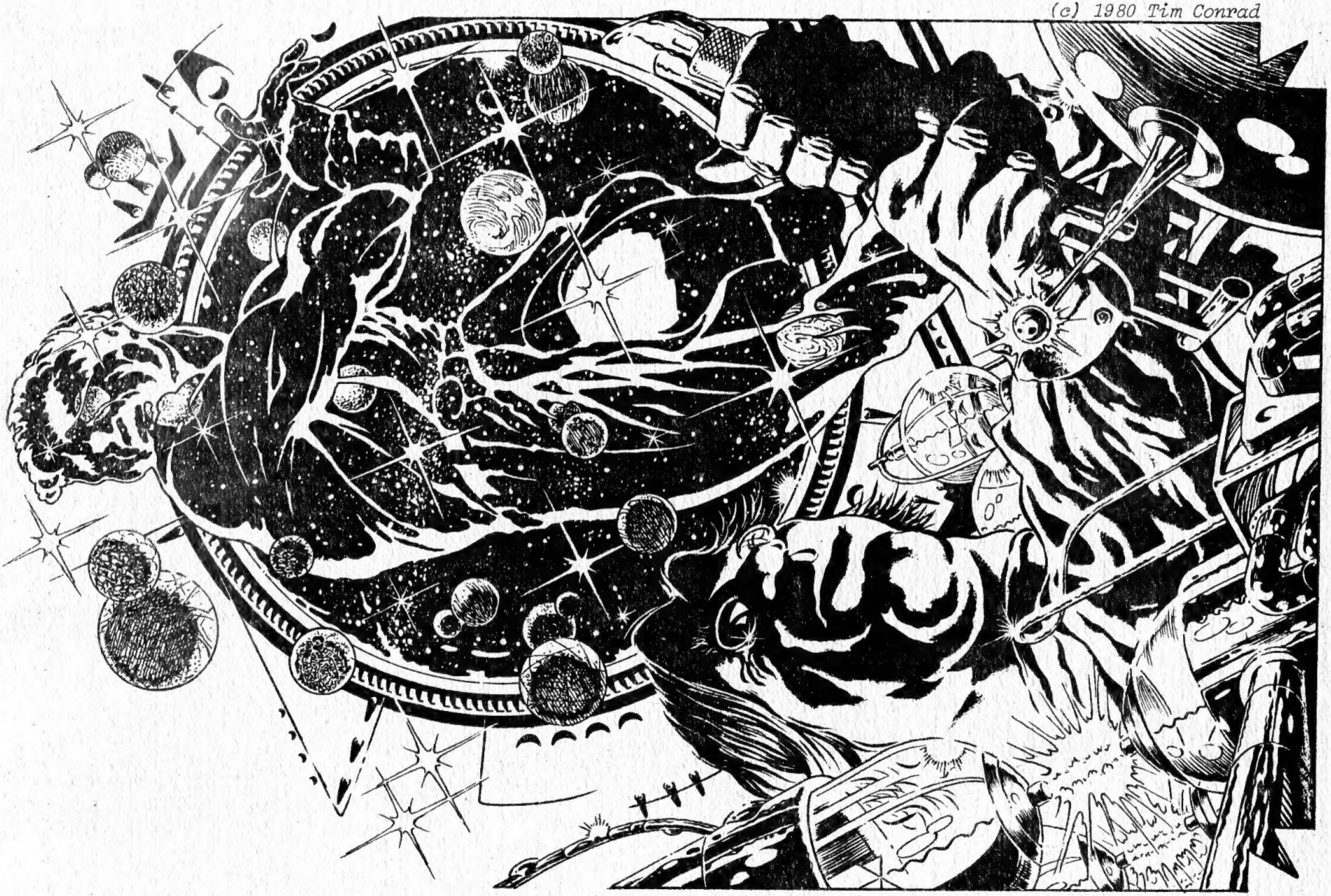

WHIZZARD

Spring1980

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Small Talk...

"I know you said *Whizzard* deals with comic art, but a lot of the drawings in here aren't even funny," commented the radio interviewer, whose research apparently ended with looking at the Sunday newspaper comics section. I should have known better when she asked,"who is Jack Kirby?" Surprisingly, I did not encounter such common questions as: "do you do all the pictures in here?", "who buys this thing?", and--one of my favorites--"how often does it come out, *weekly*?" Yet my repeated claims that the industry contained vast, unrecognized talent were ineffective against her childhood memories of *Casper* comics. Comic books are frequently condemned as badly-written, poorly-drawn, cheap entertainment which no one over ten would ever admit owning. The sad truth of such criticisms is that they're often correct.

A person sitting on a bus can enjoy "The Wizard of Id" or "Doonesbury" but if the same person is delighted over the latest *Superman* he gathers disapproving stares. Comic strips are read by over 100 million Americans every day, yet *Spiderman*, the best selling comic book, has an audience of only 250,000. Yet the public unacceptance of mainstream comics as an adult form of entertainment is fortunately limited to a small section of the medium. The current popularity of graphic novels and "adult" comic magazines like *Heavy Metal* reveal an apparent immunity to the public stigma that plagues mainstream comics, which, by contrast, are traditionally printed with lower production values and marketed as children's recreation. Marvel Comic's *Epic Illustrated*, which caters to an older market, abandons this tradition --a rare, and a welcome, addition to the industry.

Although today's mainstream comics are certainly undeserving of blind praise,blind criticism, which has become currently fashionable, is equally unjustified. In the past 40 years some incredible material has emerged in(*to p46*)

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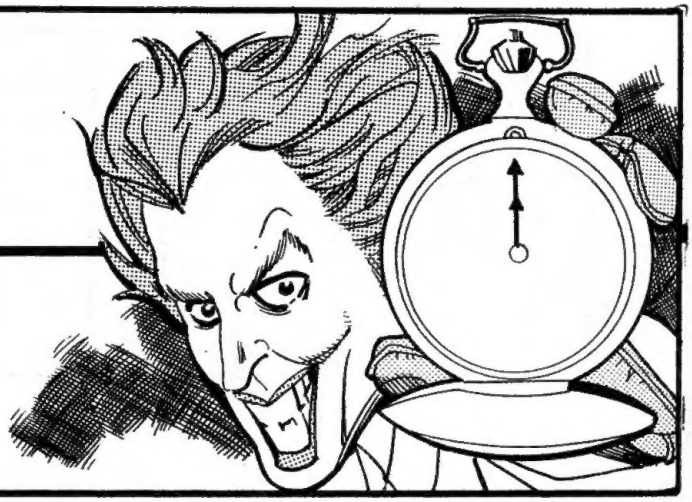
Marshall Rogers —at— MIDNIGHT



Marshall Rogers' emergence as a major comic talent rejuvenated a sense of mystery in the Batman while at the same time it renewed the serious comic audience faith that an innovative talent can still make an impression in the commercial four-color field. Starting with British weeklies, Rogers went on to do his highly acclaimed work for Detective Comics *and* Mister Miracle. *The following interview was conducted by George Haberberger with an assist from Kenn Thomas on January 4, 1980. Many of the questions were provided by Jerry E. Durrwachter and Bryan Hollerbach.*

Whizzard: Who were your major artistic influences?

Rogers: The major influence in my art career is Jack Kirby. When I was growing up reading comic books, even before I was aware of the name of Jack Kirby, Jack's work was sticking in my mind. I had read the first issue of *The Fly*. I don't remember how old I was but it was a book that really struck me. I never actually noticed the changes of the artists except for the fact that that book was no longer as inspiring or fun to read. During the early Marvel days I grew up following Jack's work. He is the person that made me want to draw comic books.

Whizzard: What comic books did you follow as a child?

Rogers: I was an avid comic book reader with about anything I could lay my hands on. Then when I started paying for the comic books I became a little bit more selective, but I would always go after a Jack Kirby comic book. I didn't really care who the character was; Kirby always knew how to tell a story that I would enjoy. Of course, there were many other artists that I followed but I couldn't mention them off the top of my head right now.

Whizzard: Do you follow any comic books today?

Rogers: No. Ever since I broke into the business I found that working on the books takes up so much of my time that I haven't got time to read other people's work. If I do get a break I would rather watch a movie or read a novel. I can't become too limited to comic books.

Whizzard: How did you get the *Detective Comics* assignment?

Rogers: I had gotten my first work at Marvel and I was doing assignments for their British publications. Not much was happening at Marvel for me to move over into their American books so I took myself over to DC to see what was available over there.

Vinnie Colletta took a look at a couple of sample pieces I had brought along with me. He liked the work so he gave me an assignment. It was a story called "Canterbury Tail," originally scheduled as a back-up in *Kamandi*. I did two of those jobs, ran back to Marvel and did a black and white job for them, and then I was back at DC and needed a new assignment.

Julius Schwartz gave me a back-up feature in *Detective Comics* that involved a villain called the Calculator. I picked up that series after a number of other artists had done four previous stories. I did the fifth story that involved Green Arrow and the sixth story that involved Hawkman. Then there was to be a complete wrap-up of all the superheroes that the Calculator had previously fought to appear in the 17-page book along with the Batman. Since I had done the last two stories and they needed an artist to do the job it was decided that I would do it. The assignment was given to me, I did it, and DC got a large amount of mail that was very favorable in response to the Calculator story. When DC had seen this they gave me the job full-time on *Detective Comics*.

Whizzard: Did Chris Claremont and you have a lot planned for the "Daughters of the Dragon?" (*Deadly Hands* 32-33)

Rogers: No. "Daughters of the Dragon" came about when I had been working for Marvel for their British books and I had talked to John Warner and Chris Claremont about doing a project. When I had left Marvel to go over to DC, John Warner gave me a call one day and asked if I was still interested. I said, "Sure I am." I explained to Julius Schwartz what the situation was--that I had given a verbal committment to do a job for Marvel--and he was very understanding. I took a short leave of absence from DC. This was in the early days; I wasn't on contract. We did a two-part story that was, as far as I was concerned, a one-shot. We haven't really talked about doing anything else with it. I have mentioned to Chris that it would be nice to work together again but nothing has really come up.

Whizzard: On *Detective Comics* was it accidental that you were paired with Steve Englehart?

Rogers: Absolutely. I knew Steve by reputation but I had never met him previously. I had never even thought of working with the gentleman. It was just a twist of fate that threw everything together on *Detective Comics*.

Whizzard: The cover of *Detective* 472 proclaimed that "The Batman is dead, long live the *new* Batman!" In the letter column of 476 Mike Friedrich echoed these sentiments by saying that "The Batman lives again!" Did you feel you were setting new standards for the character?

Rogers: No, I never really thought of it in that perspective. What I was doing was presenting the Batman as I had always seen the character. No matter who the artist was that I was seeing as a kid, I had definate impressions of what the Batman was about. I finally had my opportunity to show how to me the Batman should be presented.

Whizzard: It seems obvious that the Batman should be portrayed as a figure of the night.

Rogers: That's how the character was originally conceived. When I got the assignment to actually work on the Batman, I went back to the original *Batman* comic books and I looked at what Bob Kane and Bill Finger had done. They created a character that was suppose to be a winged nemisis of evil who could instill fear into the hearts of his villains through that costume. He's suppose to look eerie. He's suppose to look weird. He's suppose to look like a bat; only a bat was going to strike fear into criminals. The Batman is the finest designed character I have ever come across. I tried to use the design-

ed concepts in a little more designing way.

Whizzard: You frequently positioned the Batman so the shadows made his blue costume turn black. Do you think the character would be more visually believable if he were clad in black and gray rather than blue and gray?

Rogers: Very possibly. I think the cape and cowl over the ears originally were suppose to have been black with, say, a black satin type material that would have highlights on it. The blue was used to designate the highlights. As the years went by the character became a little more homogenized and his cape and cowl became blue.

Whizzard: One of the Joker's victims looked a lot like Julius Schwartz. Whose idea was this?

Rogers: (laughter) That was really just coincidental. The character was a guy who worked for the copyright bureau. As I was travelling into the city by train to go to work at Continuity (Associates) I was reading a newspaper that day and noticed a photo of a gentleman. When I saw it I said, "That's the guy! That's what the guy should look like at the copyright bureau." So I took the photo out and in my interpretation of it I guess it came down to look like Julius Schwartz. It was based on a picture of a person whose name I don't even know. Actually, there's a shot of Julius Schwartz at the end of one Manbat story. You'll notice there is a slight difference in the drawing of the two different characters.

Whizzard: Whose inking did you prefer on Batman?

Rogers: Terry gave me work that I found extremely good but it's really something that can't be judged because Terry has worked with me longer and understands my line better. Also, I had put a lot more of myself into the six Englehart stories that Terry and I did than the job I did with Dick (Giordano). Unfortunately, less time was taken on the Clayface stories than what I had put into the Englehart stories.

Whizzard: Why did you ink only one of your Batman stories?

Rogers: That was because I decided it was time for me to part ways with DC so I drew no others after that. I was hoping at that point that I could continue with the Batman and ink it myself. I was hoping to do more but that's the way the ball fell.

Whizzard: Shadows frequently fell across Bruce Wayne's face where the cowl would be and his shadow was the Batman's shadow. Was this your idea?

Rogers: If I remember correctly Steve asked for a Batman shadow to be thrown off of Bruce Wayne when he and Silver were walking down the street. I know that the shadow across of Bruce's face was my little touch. It's all trying to establish that Bruce Wayne is the Batman.

Whizzard: Did your approach illustrating "Death Strikes at Midnight and Three," a text story, significantly differ from the norm?

Rogers: It didn't really take too much of a variation on my approach. I read through the story completely. What I try to do is allow myself to have an open mind and see what impressions I get off of the story at the initial reading. I jot myself a few minor notes if I get a sharp impression on a type of angle, a type of building, or the way that the Batman would move when something was being said or done. If a particular setting or gesture of movement comes to mind while I am reading through I make notes of those initial contacts. Then I'll go back and try to thread it all together.

Actually, doing the (Denny) O'Neil story "Death Strikes at Midnight and Three" was a lot simplier in many instances than a comic book story because whatever excited me the most, whatever gave me the most inspiration, is what I would concentrate on for the spot illustrations compared to having to make everything work smoothly in the storyline of a regular comic book.

Whizzard: You frequently incorporated the sound effects into the art. Were you inspired by particular artists along those lines?

Rogers: No, there was no artist in particular who gave me inspiration for that. In my work I want to incorporate every element of the comic book into the storyline. As far as I'm concerned, a sound effect isn't something that you throw away. I tried to work it into the art so that it comes across as if it was part of the story rather than a throw-away word that is supposed to be doing something. I tried to make my sound effects give the impression or the feeling of what they are doing coming off visually in the art....A little touch of cartooning here and there I think adds a lot of vitality to the strip.

Whizzard: Several of the scenes in *Detective Comics* are reminiscent of Will Eisner's work. Even a Spirit poster appeared in one panel. Was your work significantly influenced by his?

Rogers: I can't say how significantly, per se. I think Will Eisner is a master, a gentleman who I give extreme kudos to. Unfortunately, I was never aware of the Spirit until I was well into my twenties and saw the work in retrospect. My Sunday newspapers, unfortunately, never carried the Spirit. He's a master of the field; he knows what he's doing. Eisner had a way of making his sound effects work visually. Perhaps that is part of my inspiration to the way I approach my sound effects.

Whizzard: You do a lot of "foot level" shots in your stories. In a *Detective Comics* story Silver St. Cloud and Rubert Thorne are riding in the car and you drew them from the angle under the dashboard. Are these strange perspectives homage to Eisner?

Rogers: No, that is not true. The reason for my worms-eye view approach is very often because a shot is more effective if you have an up-shot rather than an eye-level or a down-shot. So it's more for the drama of the piece that I approach my angles that way.

Whizzard: To what extent did Englehart contribute the layouts of the six Batman tales you co-produced?

Rogers: In the terms of strict layouts, nothing. In the terms of writing a story and being able to conceive it visually, everything. One of the reasons I was able to work so easily on Steve's strip is because Steve is a very visual writer. He knows the limitations of the field. Steve can go through a scene and move a character from point A to point B and make the writing work. He had a lot to do with how the story ended up looking visually, even though he had no say in the way I actually showed it. Without Steve's keen sense of movement within his script I couldn't have showed such a keen sense of movement in the work itself.

Whizzard: After Englehart and Terry Austin left *Detective* the over-all mood of the graphics seemed to change. How would you explain this difference?

Rogers: The difference goes back to Steve's involvement in the layouts of the job. The same character considerations weren't put into the way the character thinks, moves, and feels. The same overall conception of the movement of the piece wasn't in there. The story wasn't written with the same finesse for movement and as such comes across that way. No matter how good an individual is it still takes a team collaboration to pull off a good piece of work. There wasn't the same type of meshing.

Whizzard: You stopped doing the Batman shortly after Englehart left the series. Were you disappointed with Len Wein's version?

Rogers: Let's not use the word disappointed. Basically, the character was not functioning in the same way. A lot of the magic that came off of the Englehart and Rogers' Batman was that Steve and I perceived the character almost exactly the same. There were a few minor differences even in our version of the

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"DC WANTED TO DO A COMIC BOOK FOR THE 1950 TEN-YEAR OLDS, WHICH IS...ONE OF THE MAJOR THINGS THAT STEVE AND I OBJECTED TO."

Batman, but, all in all, it's almost like one man would think about the character. We just meshed very finely. The O'Neil and the Wein version of the Batman were not as acutely tuned to my train of thought.

Whizzard: If Steve Englehart came back to write the Batman again, would you consider pencilling it?

Rogers: I would certainly consider pencilling it, absolutely. I know what Steve wants out of his work and if DC were willing to meet his demands I'm sure they would be able to meet my demands also. If Steve went back to write the Batman I'm sure I'd be right there ready and willing to draw it.

As a matter of fact, Steve had written a Batman story soon after he had finished the DC stuff and, although I didn't quite beg, I was very anxious to get that job. DC wouldn't give it to me because, and I'm paraphrasing Paul Levitz, "Marshall Rogers' style was no longer conducive to the Batman."

Whizzard: Why did you decide not to work on the Batman story with Steve Englehart for *Star* Reach*?

Rogers: There were a lot of issues. Basically, (Mike) Friedrich had approached me and I was able to bring Steve into the project. The decision came especially from Steve's side. He had dealt with the comic book companies a number of years longer than I had, and he really didn't want to go through another comic book project that was going to end up just like a comic book project, without each of our individual complete considerations.

Whizzard: How would it have differed from your version in *Detective Comics*?

Rogers: To be honest, not very much at all. I feel that the way Steve wrote the character and the way I presented it were good representations of the character. Exactly where we would have started from,what we would have presented with this strip, where we would have gone, I can't say what changes would have been made. There probably would have been a little less emphasis on comic book formula and more concentration on telling a straight story, as if it would be seen in a movie house or read from a novel. We were trying to get away from comic book cliches and just give a good, solid, concise story.

Whizzard: What type of control did DC want to impose?

Rogers: DC wanted to do a comic book for the 1950 ten-year olds, which is who they think their comic book audience is and who they have to write to. That's one of the major things that Steve and I objected to.

Whizzard: What audience were Steve and you aiming at?

Rogers: I guess it was an audience basically of my peers, and people younger and older. I would really prefer to work for a mass journal audience including people as young as ten years old. In some instances I realize there is some material that, if we were working on a rating system like the movie industry, would have to be rated 'R'; there would have to be some consideration there. I don't really like to think of myself in terms of having to specify what reading audience I'm going for. I'm hoping my reading audience is just people who are looking to be entertained for an amount of time as if they would be sitting down in front of a television or going to a movie.

Whizzard: Was it going to be in the format of "Death Strikes at Midnight and Three" or in the format of a traditional comic book?

Rogers: That's where I could have done my experimentation. Steve and I probably would have done some playing around and be extremely loose. Some pages could possibly be a montage of illustrations like "Death Strikes at Midnight and Three." At other points, where there is a real solid storyline, there are times when there needs to be a visual continuity from panel to panel. We would have slipped into that. We would have tried to do as open a story as we possibly could have.

Whizzard: How did you land the *Mister Miracle* assignment?

Rogers: I had heard that they were planning to revive the character and I've always been a fan of Jack Kirby so I wanted a shot at doing a Kirby creation. *Mister Miracle* was coming up so I asked if I could be given the job. So they had me do some samples to see how I would handle the character. After I showed the samples to them they decided they would let me have it.

Whizzard: Were you apprehensive about following Jack Kirby's work?

Rogers: No, not really. I never really thought of it, per se. If I would have dwelled on it I would have gotten a little apprehensive but in the young egotism and enthusiasm I didn't consider it in those terms and just jumped right into the job.

Whizzard: Why did you leave the series?

Rogers: In the youthful enthusiasm of being in the business I found that after doing those four *Mister Miracle* stories and working on *Detective Comics* simultaneously it was really becoming too much for me to handle. I figured for myself that it was a choice of giving up *Detective* or giving up *Mister Miracle*. When I realized this was the last story that Steve Englehart was doing it made it a little easier because I always enjoyed working off of his scripts. I would have had to quit no matter what. The workload was becoming unbearable.

Whizzard: Why did you continue doing covers?

Rogers: Well, I did it because I no longer had the workload bearing down on me of a book a month, and I still needed the extra income. I enjoyed the character so I asked Larry Hama if I could do some covers and he said, "Sure."

Whizzard: Did you notice a tendency at DC for you to be replaced on strips by Michael Golden?

Rogers: (laughter) I hadn't really noticed that.

Whizzard: Do you feel that he is a worthy successor?

Rogers: Absolutely. I enjoy Mike's work immensely. Recently, I just saw some pages of a collaboration between Larry Hama and him for a book that Neal Adams is going to be publishing in Europe. I don't want to give any names and possibly expose something prematurely on them; that will be for them to bring out when they're ready. It's beautiful and some of the best stuff he's done since he's been working in comics.

Whizzard: Your work for Marvel has been solely restricted to their black and white magazines. Is this because your art doesn't conform to their house style?

Rogers: There's really no definitive answer for that question because there hasn't been any sort of support for it to be tested. When I was working for them the black and white books were younger and less restrictive. I did not have a telephone at the time I was working for Marvel, but they liked my work enough to send me a telegram to tell me there was a fill-in spot they would like me to do. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get in touch with them for two days. By that time they couldn't wait for me and had to give the assignment to someone else. It's not that my work is not conducive to their house formula, it's just that it's never had a chance to be tried. I had to move over to DC at that point.

Whizzard: Were you happy with the way the *Strange* portfolio turned out?

Rogers: Yes, very much. It took me a good amount of time to finally get that project going but when I finally saw the printed version I was extremely pleased with it for what I put into it and the reproduction quality that Schanes and Schanes gave me.

Whizzard: Have you done any substantial work for the comic companies which has never been printed?

Rogers: No. There is a good amount of samples that are lying around tucked away in some back corner but there are no comic book stories that were commissioned that are sitting around on a shelf. However, there is a 25 page Madame Xanadu story that I did for *Doorway To Nightmare* but that's waiting for the 200th issue of *Unexpected*. That will be appearing in there.

Whizzard: Do you save printed copies of your work?

Rogers: Yes, if I think about it at the time. Very often I've been in such a hectic rush that I'll have a number of copies and they'll drift off to friends. I find myself short on my Marshall Rogers collection at times, but I try to keep at least one copy of each work that I've done.

Whizzard: Do you have any desire to write comics?

Rogers: Yes, and it's growing stronger and stronger. I'm about to turn the big thirty years old so I can no longer trust myself. I feel the desire to write is getting stronger and stronger and I'm going into a phase of my life where I might be able to do something with it. I've come up with a storyline that I'm in the process of trying to put together and present to a couple of different people and see if they're interested in giving it a shot.

Whizzard: Is this a limited press project or are you planning to go to the major companies with it?

Rogers: Well, I won't be going to Marvel or DC with it because it's not the type of material they're interested in. It would be a series of ten short stories linked together by one person and the events in his life. That's really as far as I can say right now. It's not really a superhero based idea at all, so Marvel or DC would not be interested. I can't say where it would appear but there are a number of possibilities.

Whizzard: Do you have any plans of doing overground type of work?

Rogers: I have no plans right now to work for Marvel or DC, yet I don't know what the future will hold. I feel there is a good possibility I'll be doing work for *Heavy Metal* in the future but I can't say what because I don't know.

Whizzard: It's been reported that you'll be doing work for *Epic Illustrated*.

Rogers: (laughter) That's news to me. If that's what they're saying they must have plans to reprint something of mine I did for them in the past. I have no plans of doing anything new for *Epic*.

Whizzard: Do they have the rights to reprint your material?

Rogers: Unfortunately, they do. That's why I no longer work for DC or Marvel because they can take anything I've done for them previously and do whatever they damn well please with it and give me nothing in return for it. I understand both Marvel and DC pay what is known as American reprint rates. The pay is not very good but I would assume if they're going to print something of mine that I will be seeing some small renumeration for it.

Whizzard: Is the comics guild a dead issue?

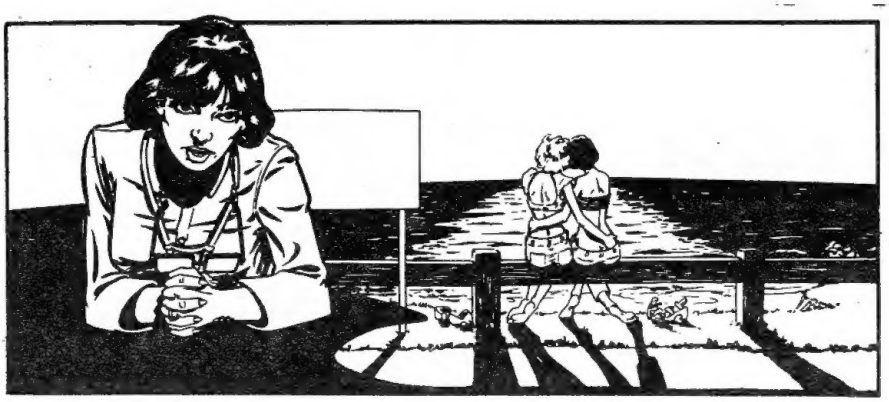
Rogers: No, it is not a dead issue. It's been extremely difficult. It is a project that is extremely demanding on one's time and I or any of the other people involved have not been able to devote full attention to it. We're trying now to get it under way once again and we're in the process of actually making our last official step. The people involved in putting the guild together, as compared to the people that have joined, are only an *ad hoc* committee for forming a guild. So what our job is at this point is to get out a nomination ballot to all people involved, get nominations for positions on an official board for the comic book creators guild, and have an election. That's what we're in the process of doing at this point. We're getting out a letter to get nominations and get the elections going. Then it will be up to the people voted in to deal with it from that point.

Whizzard: It's an issue that seems to have lost a lot of attention on convention panels.

Rogers: Well, that is because originally there were people in the audience who were really gung ho about it, who really wanted to see it get off the ground. It was helpful because it needed to be talked about. Right now all the talking that can be done has been done. It's going to be up to individuals to take it from this point. It's been, at points, a very discouraging endeavor. I thought people would be more concerned about their futures. When I ran into a lot of apathy it became quite discouraging. I still feel that it is a necessary organization that will be needed if the artists (and I use the term *artists* to mean everyone involved on the creative end of a comic book) to get together and start to think about their collective and individual futures. I see the guild as being the only opportunity for something like that.

Whizzard: What kind of book is *Detectives, Inc.*?

Rogers: It's not a particular comic book in the formulization or style of DC or Marvel. It's definately a comic book format but the storyline is a little bit straighter; it's not rock-'em-sock-'em-punch-'em-out action on every page of the book. It's more in the line of a movie about two detectives who live and work in New York City and one of their assignments that covers about a three



(c) 1981 Marshall Rogers

I KNOW THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CAN KILL, OR MAIM, AND HAVE IT MEAN NOTHING TO THEM--
--AND I DON'T KNOW HOW IN HELL TO COPE WITH THE FACT THAT THOSE PEOPLE EXIST, RIGHT HERE!

(c) 1980 Marshall Rogers

month period.

Whizzard: Don McGregor claims it features all kinds of things including "abortion, youth gangs, violence, divorce, bisexuality, homosexuality, heterosexuality, and not necessarily in that order."

Rogers: Yes, Don touches on everything. You have to realize that I'm not really up on the storyline of the book. I haven't read the story from beginning to end in a visual form. When I first get a job I read through it, get a feel of the characters, a feel of settings, and things that are going on during it. I never look at a job as a whole while I'm working on it: it's always piecemeal. I never have a full conception of what a total job looks like. I can't make any comments on the job at this point because I'm still immersed in the middle of it. Finally when I get a job done, I'll sit back and read it and really know what it's about, but I don't know it as well as Don understands the story. Don sat through it, he wrote it, he came up with it, and he knows what it's all about.

I take the job and I make it work visually from what Don has put down. I have a working idea of who the characters are, what they do from page to page, but not a broad sense of it yet.

Whizzard: Are you working from a completed script?

Rogers: Oh, yes. That's the way I enjoy working. I find that knowing exactly what's being said, who is saying what, and what is being done at that time, gives me a better perspective to make the visuals work accordingly with the story.

Whizzard: How long will it be?

Rogers: The book itself is going to be 50 pages. The story itself is 46 pages and there will be four extra pages which include the two covers. We've broken it down into approximately ten chapters, and a prologue and an epilogue. McGregor really knows how to squeeze it in... The prologue is eleven pages. Don had originally written it for eight but there's a lot of stuff going on in that opening and there's no way I could put it in a limit of eight pages. I had to expand that out to eleven.

Whizzard: Did Eclipse Enterprises approach you for this project?

Rogers: Don and Eclipse had talked about doing another project after *Sabre*. This is a project that Don has been wanting to do for a long time. I met him when I was first trying to break into the business and at that point he was thinking about an independent project with these two characters. It had to be independent because the comic book companies don't print a story as laid-back as this. This demands that the reader actually does some reading and understands what's going on rather than just looking at fist fights.

Whizzard: By taking McGregor's story and doing it visually are you less cramped than in a 17-page overground comic?

Rogers: Not really. Don wrote 46 pages just like writers write 17 pages. There was a lot of shuffling that had to be done. I took Don's concepts and then re-tailored them into my style of storytelling. Working with 46 pages has created about twice as many headaches as working on a 17 page story because there's more than twice as much stuff to do. I had never approached a project of this size. Also, there's a lot entailed outside the realm of regular comic books that I wasn't prepared for and am having to deal with as it comes along.

Whizzard: Has your work on *Detective Comics* helped prepare you for this book?

Rogers: There was some preparation. Some of my storytelling technique that I did in Batman was groundwork for what I'm doing here. The Batman stories I worked on, specifically with Englehart, were what I felt were more of a story with a storyline rather than filling up 17 pages and having to do something. So I approached Steve's work with a cinematic type of storytelling. That's exactly what is called for here in the McGregor book. There has to be more visual continuity, a little bit more emphasis on camera angles, and pulling a story together visually so it moves along with a storyline as the dialogue is being said.

Whizzard: When is the projected release date?

Rogers: I don't know exactly the projected release date because that would depend on how much time it would take the printer to have the book done. What we are hoping for, and that's everyone entailed, is that I will have the book ready for Eclipse at the end of February. Then they would take it to the printer at that point. It shouldn't take more than a month or so until the first issues are being sent out to the advance orders.

Whizzard: Is the February date a self-imposed deadline?

Rogers: That's a self-imposed deadline. In fact, I had been hoping I could clear the job up at the end of January. When I finally started getting down to the inks, and a couple of slight delays along the way, it had been postponed until the end of February. It's a very loose deadline. Neither Eclipse nor I are interested in rushing the job out ahead of it looking good and finished. That's our first concern.

I'm pleased with the way the book is starting to shape together. When I start to work on a story I have a concept of what the package is going to look like but what the reality of the situation is still for the future to bear. Now, at this point with all the

pencils behind me and a good deal into the inks, I'm starting to see what the job really looks like. I'm pleased with it myself.

Whizzard: How would you compare the storytelling styles between Steve Englehart and Don McGregor? Steve's style seems a little more concise.

Rogers: Yes, that is true. Don's story on *Detectives, Inc.* may be unrecognizable as a McGregor story at first glance because I worked from Don's completed script. There is a little bit better pacing of the words; there is eye-rest. When I have a full-script it allows me to mold the story from the initial concept into my art style of storytelling.

Whizzard: Do you envision yourself ever doing a graphic novel like Howard Chaykin's *Empire*? Would you describe *Detectives, Inc.* like that?

Rogers: Detectives, Inc. can't really be compared to *Empire* other than they are each independent projects. To begin with, *Detectives, Inc.* is black and white. *Detectives, Inc.* is also more of a strict comic book continuity from panel to panel. Howard breaks loose of the panel continuity confines in many instances.

I'm sure there could be a possibility for a project like that for me in the future, but I haven't given it any thought and no one has approached me on it. It would be something I would be interested in doing.

Whizzard: In 1977 you did a cover for *The Comic Reader* 147 featuring a character named Disciple. What's his story and will we ever see him again?

Rogers: The Disciple made another appearance in the portfolio. He is the character with a large black cloak and smoking a pipe. One of the possibilities for one of my future projects,with an unknown publisher at this point, is incorporating the *Strange* portfolio into a storyline. As a matter of fact, Steve (Englehart) and I have talked about a future collaboration and something will be happening at some point. There is a good possibility that he'll be using the *Strange* portfolio as a springboard, starting off with those characters and seeing what others we can develop.

Whizzard: Do you have any more plans to do portfolio work?

Rogers: Yes, as a matter of fact I just signed a contract with Sal Quartuccio to do a Batman portfolio. I'm not certain when it's coming out, but it will be on sale by the time for the summer conventions.

Whizzard: Do you paint paperback covers?

Rogers: No, I don't. I do very little painting. I do not consider the *Heavy Metal* job painting, that was a colored job. It's something that's been attracting me more and more recently but I feel that getting into painting will necessitate me dropping out of sight for a year or two and just turning my complete attention to that. I would probably move somewhere secluded and spend all my time concentrating on all the techniques.

Whizzard: Your work outside mainstream comics has dealt with decidedly different subject matter than that done within it. Do you feel that each outlet, by its nature,demands a different approach?

Rogers: Yes, it does. As a matter of fact each individual story demands a different approach. Unfortunately, within the confines of mainstream comics the approach is formulized and it is very difficult to step outside those boundaries. So whenever I am able to get outside of mainstream comics I do as much work outside those boundaries as I possibly can. It all comes down to what I feel is necessary to bring across the story.

Whizzard: Would you say the restrictions of the mainstream medium is what basically gears you away from that type of material?

Rogers: Absolutely.

Whizzard: How would you define those restrictions?

Rogers: That's a difficult question. What I guess I dislike the most about the formulized comic books of today is

> "BASICALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO KEEP A LOT OF PEOPLE ENTERTAINED. I THINK THAT A LOT MORE LAUGHTER AND DIVERSION IS NEEDED WITH TODAY'S ROTTEN TIMES..."

that they have over-killed themselves to the extent of trying to be more super than the last issue.

Specifically, when Marvel was just in its young days the emphasis on *Spiderman* wasn't that he was a superhero but it was that he was a masked kid who had abilities greater than those of the reader and he was able to hide behind a mask and do everyday things with this extra power. He ran across extra powered people that were counter-points to himself but the emphasis was on telling a story rather than running off and saving the world everyday. Spiderman didn't always run off and save the world everyday. I'm getting awful sick of drawing stories where the hero saves the world. That's why I enjoyed Steve's Batman story so much. It was more of a story rather than just 17 pages which had to have the Batman character appear in it. Everything has been taken to the extreme and it's gotten past the point that I find personally desirable.

Whizzard: It also deprives the comics of a sense of humor.

Rogers: I always like to intersperse a touch of cartooning here and there. I try not to take myself too seriously while I'm doing this work. As far as I'm concerned when you read a comic book you're suppose to be interested in looking for entertainment, some enjoyment, and I think a little touch of humor every once and awhile helps to pull that off. One of the things I don't think the mainstream allows itself is enough leeway to incorporate those things. It is another reason I find it difficult to work in mainstream comics.

Whizzard: Did you follow Joe Staton's *E-Man* comics?

Rogers: No, I didn't. They appeared as I basically phased out of comics for a period of about three years trying to conform to the American dream.

Whizzard: You took a few years out to be Joe Average?

Rogers: It came time for college and my parents wanted me to attend and learn a profession where I could make a million dollars and live happily ever after. I attended because the draft was a real thing at the time and it kept me from going off to Vietnam. For about two years I played that game and was becoming increasingly agitated. A combination of events lead me to quit college. One of the major reasons was that I was included in the first lottery draft for Vietnam and I pulled a very high number --one of the first times I won by losing --and unless an all-out, full-scale war was declared where everybody went I knew that I wouldn't be going to Vietnam. So I no longer had to worry about the deferment of college. That's basically when I left and decided I would really be happier being a comic book artist as compared to an architect.

Whizzard: Is there any other personal influence other than the fact that you liked to read comics that lead you into the medium or being an artist?

Rogers: I feel that it's always been initially there. I've always been more artistic than anything else. I've always been more of a romantic than a realist. These are two characteristics that lead one to the business.

Whizzard: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Rogers: I don't really think so. I don't really beef about too many things. I make my own bed and I have to lay in it. What I've chosen to do is what I'm doing. On that aspect, I'm fairly satisfied. The reason I'm not working in the mainstream comics is because I'm trying to be pleased with myself in what I'm doing and working outside of it has afforded me a little more personal pleasure and gratification from the work that I do.

Whizzard: What exactly are your hopes and ambitions for your career?

Rogers: Well, I've never really thought about it in those terms. Basically, I would like to keep a lot of people entertained. I think that a lot more laughter and diversion is needed with today's rotten times. If I can afford some people a little bit of escape from the pressures of today that is basically what I'm looking for.

BY RICH MORRISSEY

Ten years from now when fans discuss the great comics of the 1970's, *Detective Comics* 471 through 476 will still be frequently mentioned. Together, these issues contained one of the best Batman stories of all time--a tale of the Batman's relationship with and reaction to two disparate and completely new people in his life--the lovely Silver St. Cloud on the one hand and the corrupt political boss Rupert Thorne on the other. These six issues are unique in being the only joint effort on this character of one of the finest and most perfectly-matched teams ever to handle him--writer Steve Englehart, penciller Marshall Rogers, and inker Terry Austin.

Detective 471 through 476 and the issues immediately surrounding them exhibit a remarkable symmetry. Although the story in these issues is complete in itself, it also falls neatly into four parts--a two-issue serial, two single-issue stories, and then another two-parter. Each of these four distinct parts has a separate subplot centering around a different classic Batman villain, but the running plots involving Thorne and Silver most directly run steadily through the six issues, building up to a truly remarkable climax.

Flanking these six issues were two more two-part series with looser ties to them in both creators and content. *Detective* 469 and 470 contained a story written by Englehart (but illustrated by Walt Simonson and Al Milgrom), and 478 and 479 contained a story pencilled by Rogers (but written by Len Wein and inked by Dick Giordano). Both of these stories had connections with the Thorne and St. Cloud plotlines (the former introduced both characters and the latter dealt with Batman's reaction to the end of the menace of Thorne and his relationship with Silver) but both were primarily concerned with new villains--Dr. Phosphorus in the former and Clayface (not to be confused with the two earlier Batman villains bearing the same name) in the latter. Although both were good stories in their own right neither Englehart nor Rogers alone came close to the quality of the series they and Austin worked on together.

Finally, these stories in turn were both proceeded and followed by single Batman stories illustrated by Rogers and having no connection in either plot or writers with the ten issues that collectively told the complete story of the Batman, Rubert Thorne, and Silver St. Cloud. The latter was written by Denny O'Neil and both pencilled and inked by Rogers. The former was written by Bob Rozakis and inked by Austin, the only non-Englehart Batman story Austin inked and by far the worst of the lot both in story and in art. And yet, if not for this issue, *Detective* 468, most of the others would not have turned out as well as they did.

Although he has denied doing so consciously, Julius Schwartz gave the impression of treating *Detective Comics* as a more "experimental" book than *Batman* from the time he took them both over in 1964. *Detective* was the first to see the writing of John Broome and (for the first time since 1939) Gardner Fox on the Batman stories, and the art of Carmine Infantino augmenting that of Bob Kane and his steadily-declining army of ghosts. Later, although it was in *Batman* that Robin graduated from college and Batman resumed his career as a solo crime-fighter, it was *Detective* that immediately took advantage of the switch by unleashing the new, brilliant team of Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams on Batman's readers. Even when Julie chose *Detective* as the Batman title to give up for a new project in 1973, it became more of an experimental title than ever--for his temporary replacement, Archie Goodwin, filled the seven issues he handled with unique Batman stories that he wrote and unusual artists like Jim Aparo and Howard Chaykin drew. His new back feature, an updated Manhunter has become legendary--it ran for the first six issues with some of Walt Simonson's best art ever, and concluded in the seventh with a 20-page classic teaming the Manhunter with the Batman, a tale in which both writer Goodwin and artist Simonson may well have reached their all-time peak.

Nevertheless,by early 1972 *Detective* seemed to have sunk into as much of a rut as *Batman*. Neal Adams and his ilk had left comic books for greener pastures and both Batman books were being regularly illustrated by the unspectacular Ernie Chau. Chau was about to return to Marvel and change his name to Ernie Chan; under either name he was a competent inker but a very boring penciller. Schwartz's backup features had never been of Manhunter's quality--few backup features, or leads, in *any* comic books have been--but lately he had apparently been at more and more of a loss with respect to the backup in *Detective*. Ever-decreasing page counts had made it harder and harder to do much with the space in any case. Batman, who had once been only one lead feature of many in the book, now could allow at most six pages for even a single co-feature. Schwartz had several times experimented with plainclothes detectives but more and more space was becoming a refuge for other DC heroes as they lost their own books. His latest experiment was an attempt to take full advantage of that and perhaps to recapture some of the qualities that made Manhunter so memorable.

This project was a serial written by Bob Rozakis, each chapter of which would feature the same villain (a Rozakis creation called the Calculator) and a different hero until all the Justice League members who didn't have their own books had been exhausted. At last it would conclude with a booklength story in which all these heroes and Batman teamed up for one last crack at the Calculator. It was supposed to have a single artist as well but after Mike Grell (a flashy artist but not a very good storyteller, whose star at DC rose so fast that he soon had no time to waste on backup features) had done the first two chapters, the third fell into the hands of the lackluster Chua. It was then that, possibly in a final attempt to get at least some of the Manhunter quality into the series, Marshall Rogers made his *Detective* debut. He did the last Calculator backup with Hawkman--and the last, full-length chapter, centering around the Batman, in 468.

In some ways, hiring Rogers was the closest Schwartz could come to the conclusion of the Manhunter series, for at this time Rogers seemed to be heavily influenced by Walt Simonson. Unfortunately, Rogers had little command of anatomy, and his figures and panel structures came across as totally confusing--and not having a particularly good script to work with only made it worse. The early reaction, and sales, were not too bad but the Calculator series as a whole, if falling short of total disaster, was definately uneven and confusing from beginning to end. Fortunately, Schwartz had better things in the works for *Detective*.

Steve Englehart, a long-time Marvel writer who had become disillusioned with that company's policies, decided to try his luck at DC. He was welcomed there with open arms and publisher Jenette Kahn told him he could write any character he wanted to. The Batman had long been a favorite of his so he was introduced to Julie Schwartz. Whether because he only wanted to write eight issues before he went to Europe or because Schwartz still subconsciously considered

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Detective the experimental title, Englehart was given that rather than *Batman*.

Englehart wanted as much space as possible, so Schwartz finally took the plunge and let Batman have the entire book regularly rather than, as in the Calculator conclusion, only for team-up stories. (Actually, Englehart's first issue contained a "separate" six-page story introducing the villain but all pretense of retaining the multi-story format was abandoned thereafter.) With a top-quality writer once more both editor and writer settled on Walt Simonson as the best available artist and proudly presented the story in *Detective* 469 as "The Batman you've been waiting for!"

Unfortunately, he wasn't quite. Simonson had long been considered one of the best Batman artists on the strength of that last Batman/Manhunter story ("Gotterdammerung," *Detective* 443) but that had been a deliberately atypical story. In fact, Simonson had been chosen because his art was *not* in the traditional Batman style--in Archie Goodwin's words, Manhunter's "light and airy" style was intended to contrast with the "dark and moody" Batman. "Gotterdammerung" was much more a Manhunter story than it was a Batman one. Although Simonson had done later Batman stories on occasion they never quite seemed to fit.

The situation was made even worse by Simonson's failure to ink his own work on *Detective* 469 and 470 or even to do full pencils. His style loses most of its uniqueness when anyone else inks it, and Al Milgrom's embellishment, while attempting to restore the "dark and moody" atmosphere Simonson lacked, resulted in a clash between two conflicting styles. The two issues handled by this team were full of distorted faces and figures. Also, Steve Englehart had not hit his stride on the story, a well-written but slightly far-fetched tale of yet another radiation-victim villain. At this point, Englehart's most noteworthy DC work was the *Justice League* which still fell short of some of his past scripts for Marvel.

It was to Marvel that Simonson soon decided to go as well, leaving the series for which Englehart had such high hopes largely unfulfilled. Once again Schwartz decided to go with the next best thing to Simonson himself, Marshall Rogers--but not without some difficulty. DC's hierarchy had recently underwent some changes. An editor no longer had complete control over his own creative staff. Schwartz found his new choice for a *Detective* artist challenged in other quarters by people who felt that an artist as "inexperienced" as Rogers was not ready to become a regular on as important a character as Batman. But Schwartz stood firm citing the favorable reaction to 268 and the fact that Englehart was on record as preferring an original newcomer to a tired-out hack. He finally had his way; Rogers pencilled 271 with his previous collaborator Terry Austin (who had inked the Calculator series from the beginning) inking him. It seemed to be the best that could be done.

And suddenly something clicked!

Englehart's scripts matched the new Rogers/Austin art perfectly. He, too, attempted to combine the best aspects of all the past Batman writers as Rogers did with the artists--and the names of Dick Sprang, Jerry Robinson--the two talented early ghosts who, along with Bob Kane, influenced the much improved Rogers--(Bill) Finger, (John) Broome, and many others popped up from time to time in his stories. *Detective* 471 and 472 featured the return of a very old Batman villain, Dr. Hugo Strange, selected by Englehart partially as a tribute to one of the characters he had written about at Marvel, who had the same title and surname. At one point in the story he even wore a face mask that made him look like the Marvel character, but Schwartz, regrettably, figured that enough was enough and changed Hugo's title to "Professor" throughout.

Even so, the story was remarkable for the way it presented the villain as a criminal but a rather noble one who avoided murder whenever possible, not unlike Lex Luthor in the *Superman* series. It was in this story that Rupert Thorne really began to make things hard for Batman, being able to ram a new ordinance through the city council prohibiting the Batman from operating. This was another element of the early Batman series that some fans wanted to see revived but by doing so Englehart only showed how superfluous it was. Batman continued to operate much as he always had. The retraction of the ordinance in *Detective* 476 at the end of the series was a literal anticlimax.

Some fans found the establishment of such a strong boss in Gotham City a bit unprecedented but in fact one earlier story (*Batman* 245) had indicated that the city's government was rather corrupt. It might have helped if Englehart had used the name of one of the two rival bosses, Harvey and Biler, from that story but in all likelihood one (or even both) were among Thorne's underlings. Thorne ultimately proved to be the real villain of the Professor Strange two-parter, in the second part of which Batman hardly appeared at all! Strange had captured Batman, unmasked him, and he had taken his place as both Batman and Bruce Wayne. While preparing to abscond with the Wayne millions, he attempted to augment them by selling Batman's secret identity to the underworld but while Robin defeated Strange's henchmen and freed the real Bruce, Strange was captured by Thorne. As it turned out, none of those henchmen knew Batman's identity and Strange himself was beaten to death by Thorne's inquisitors, protecting his adversary's secret to the end.

This unprecedented conclusion was followed by more originality in the vein of the early Batman stories. *Detective* 473 featured Batman and Robin against the Penguin, a villain detested by many latter-day Batman fans who saw him as the epitome of the "campy" villains of the '60's television series. in truth, the Penguin had only been living proof of the way light elements could be combined with serious ones to create a truly memorable and impressive villain. The stylized writing and art made Oswald Cobblepot's caricatured form come more to life than ever before. The following issue featured another obscure '40's villain, Deadshot, with another unique twist of him snatching the Penguin's escape device in prison before the Penguin could use it!

Englehart and Rogers saved the best till last. The final two issues of the series gave them a crack at the most classic Batman villain of all: the Joker. The Joker was recognized earlier by the O'Neil/Adams team as the brilliant character he is, but this story featured him at his peak. It presented both aspects of his personality--the incredibly clever jester and the homicidal maniac--in equal amounts. The Batman had his hands full with a man whose motives were sometimes insane but was in some ways "as sane as anybody." When he finally conquered him, and captured Thorne to boot, it was hinted that it was not without some spectral help from the departed Professor Strange.

All through these six issues ran the Thorne plotline as well as the most memable of all: Bruce Wayne's relationship with Silver St. Cloud. The artists and writers made the readers share Bruce's delight in finding Silver and the sadness in losing her in a truly unique way. She actually recognized the Batman as Bruce Wayne which nobody (with the possible exception of his oldest friend in both identities, Commissioner Gordon) had ever done. She decided she could not maintain the relationship with someone whose first concern had to be fighting crime and the last panels in *Detective* 476 showed her final meeting with--and parting from--Batman. Englehart's script *had* had the two walking toward each other, looking into each other's eyes for a final farewell and the Batman swinging away into the night with a tear in his eye but Rogers had them exchange a final, passionate kiss before they parted. Some have correctly argued that Englehart's version was more appropriate for the termination of a relationship but the Rogers' version was definately effective. It provided a fitting climax to an epic series.

At the time, *Detective Comics* seemed to have nothing but good things ahead. True, Englehart was gone but Marshall Rogers was to continue as the regular artist on the book and the writing was to be taken over by Len Wein. Wein had done well with his few previous Batman stories and was so enthusiastic about the assignment that he had taken it even while still on staff at Marvel. The resulting strained relations there had soon caused him to make a clean break and return to DC full-time.

His first Batman story for *Detective*, in 478 and 479, was plotted quite well, although a step down from the Englehart serial that had preceded it. Perhaps unwisely, Wein chose to begin his story on the same day Englehart's had ended, with the Batman so depressed over the loss of Silver that he uncharacteristically babbled on about her, once actually mentioning her name in the presence of criminals (*continued to pg. 31*)

Emerging on the comic scene in 1972 at age 20 with a B.A. in Painting, Craig Russell achieved in just three years a noted reputation for his innovative artistic work on Ant-Man, Dr. Strange, and Killraven, Marvel's longest lasting science fiction series. Leaving the industry in 1976 he has since produced diverse projects including an adaptation of Richard Wagner's Parsifal, illustrations for Byron Preiss' Weird Heroes, Night Music for Eclipse Enterprises, and currently is engaged in his three room Ohio studio on a graphic novel featuring Michael Moorcock's Elric. The following telephone interview was conducted on November 10, 1979 by Marty Klug.

Whizzard: What comic books did you read as a child?

Russell: I read just about everything that came out. When I was very young I was into the Harvey and Disney books, especially Carl Barks' Donald Duck. Of course, I didn't know that it was Carl Barks, but I knew that it was *the* duck. Then when I got older I ran into *The Fantastic Four*, the early issues, and became an avid Marvel fan after that. Among my favorites were two Eisner reprints by Harvey in the mid sixties, which I read over and over again; and three issues of *Flash Gordon* by King that Al Williamson did, which inspired me to do my first comic book page. It was on typewriting paper with ballpoint pen and colored pencils. That was the first one.

Whizzard: Did you have any plans of drawing comics professionally?

Russell: By the time I finished high school I knew that I wanted to go into some field of art. I knew I wanted to draw but I didn't know exactly what. It wasn't until I was actually given a chance to get into comics and realize that I could that I took advantage of it.

I was very lucky because Dan Adkins was living in Ohio about seven miles from my parents' house. I met him during my sophomore year in college and he sponsored me. I got into the business through him. Otherwise, I would have had to wait to finish college and go to New York with no experience at all and try to break in. It would have been very difficult.

Whizzard: How did Adkins sponsor you in the industry? Is that commonly done?

Russell: Most people get in by working with an established professional. He would do thumbnail sketches, breakdowns for the stories, and generally indicate where I should use the close-ups and long-shots and concentrate on the pacing of the story. After I finished every page he would go over it and tell me which corrections to make. Of course we didn't always agree on that, but generally it worked out. I did that for about six months. After awhile I started doing my own layouts, yet he was still responsible to see that it met a certain standard.

After a few months we went to New York for the July 4th convention and went to the offices to meet a few people. I was very hesitant about even going in. It was MARVEL COMICS. Gosh! I got to see a lot of the original artwork that the other artists had done and started becoming aware of the different styles one could use. None of the other artists pencilled as tightly as we did. I was surprised to see that. Until then I had thought everyone pencilled very tight, which is not so. I haven't changed my style as much as that goes very much since then.

Whizzard: Was "Moon of Madness, Moon of Fear!" (*Chamber of Chills* #1) your first story?

Russell: Yes. It was pretty awful. Luckily Dan inked it so it came off looking a lot better than it would have. It was completely styleless. I was just learning to put a comic together and I had enough to do worrying about that without thinking about my personal style, which didn't begin to develop for some time. I did several short horror stories, some background and inking on *Conan*, an early Dr. Strange, an *Iron Man*; then when I moved to New York in '74 I did a couple issues of Morbius and began the War of the Worlds series.

Whizzard: At what point did the Craig Russell style begin to emerge?

Russell: That would have been in '73. After I finished the Ant Man series and *Iron Man* I took a leave of absence for about six months to finish my schooling, but I still wanted to practice comics. I started working on a Dr. Strange story that I plotted myself with no real intention of selling it; I just wanted to do it. When I had that freedom without having to worry about the editors or the writers and it being under a certain kind of scrutiny, I really opened up. The twenty pages I did on the story were eventually used in the *Dr. Strange Annual*. Anyone interested in following the style can go from the last issue of Ant Man (*Marvel Feature* #10) to the *Dr. Strange Annual*, and you will get some idea of what editorial freedom will do for a person because there was a complete change.

Whizzard: Would you say that formal art training would be more beneficial to artists than on the job experience?

Russell: Well, there's no replacement for on the job experience. At the same time there's so many approaches you can be exposed to in four years of schooling that you will not be exposed to in commercial comics: different ways of drawing, different ways of looking at things. Although most of my teachers were against realistic rendering, object drawings, I still learned so much about gesture, form, color which I've been able to bring to my art that many people trained and exposed only to professional comics aren't aware of. Just as there's no replacement for on the job experience, there's no replacement for some good art classes--if you have good teachers. It is responsible for a lot of my attitudes toward my work: the way I work, what I expect from my work, and what I think my work should do--which is why I'm against turning artwork out by the yard which becomes necessary to so many people to make a living in comics. There's no replacement for the free time it gives you to spend on your work without having to worry about editors and publishers, testing yourself to see how far you can go with it, to see what you can do without someone telling you, "We don't do it that way here." It's just invaluable.

Whizzard: Did you see Don McGregor re-

gularly when working on the Killraven books?

Russell: Yes. He lived in Queens and I lived in Manhattan and he was always coming into the office so we spent a lot of time together working on those books. He did most of the in-fighting with all of the editors so by the time I got the plot a lot of it was ironed out. Even if they were getting up in arms about the subject matter they never bothered me about the pictures. Don was the one who really had to do the fighting, which was just as well because of the two of us he's the real scrapper. I prefer just to sit and do my work and not be bothered. He would get in there and just wouldn't let up. (laughter) Between the two of us we managed to get it out. It was a real good experience working with him. Even though I spent several years working in the comic industry I never really felt I was in commerical comics because I was working with McGregor. His attitude is so completely different from everyone else's. It was a total committment, which is really unusual in comics. I was really lucky that I was able to work with someone for a couple of years that was as totally committed to their work as I was.

Whizzard: Did you ever discuss the scripts?

Russell: Every time he gave me a plot, I'd go over it. He would explain a lot, in his plot synopsis and in person, concerning what he was looking for in a character. We both had our own territories that the other didn't trespass on. I didn't make script suggestions and if he made any visual suggestions it was to be regarded as a suggestion. Neither of us expected the other to make any real concessions. What we both tried to do was to be as faithful to the other's vision as we could. When he gave me a plot I tried as well as I could to interpret that well and tell the story well.

Occasionally I would say "there's too much story here" for the pages we have...It was never about the subject matter or the concept of the story; it had to do with physical space and how much room we had.

In the same way he was always happy with the pictures. That was another thing that made it so rewarding to work with him. I would do this and I would get instant feedback, and it was almost always positive. Who doesn't like that? (laughter) So, we kind of fed off each other's energy that way and got something going.

Whizzard: Since science fiction comics are not traditionally big sellers, how would you attribute Killraven's success for three years?

Russell: (laughter) Partly by the fact that it was considered a prestige book. I've never seen the sales figures, but I've been told that sales were not very good and the only reason that it was continued was that it made Marvel look good to be putting out a book like that. That's not unusual for a company to have a book that is artistically doing well; they will hold off cancelling it for a while because it makes the whole line look a little bit better.

After a while, I knew that I was getting ready to quit. I wanted to do some other things so I wasn't too upset about it being cancelled. If it was another book that didn't look as well, they would have cancelled it much sooner.

Whizzard: While you were working on Killraven, were you approached by any writers asking you to work on more mainstream titles?

Russell: Yes, I was. I had even gone over to DC, but then decided against it. One of the editors over there was saying very patronizingly, "Well boy, we'll bring you along kind of slow at first." I had been doing comics for three years already. That didn't make me the old man of the sea but I didn't want to be "brought along." So I thought I didn't need this and stayed at Marvel.

Whizzard: At what point did the sales drop significantly enough to justify Killraven's cancellation?

Russell: I have no idea. I very rarely followed that and they weren't very anxious to let you in on it either. It was one of the more annoying things about working in the comics industry. I prefer working with people that let you know all the way along how the printing is going, how the publishing is going, what kind of profits they're making. It's important to me that my business partner make a profit at it; it's certainly in my best interest. It's important to me that it means something to him, that publishing something is as important to him as the act of drawing something is to me. You don't get that personal feeling from overground comics.

The best relationship I've had that way is working with Jan and Dean Mullaney at Eclipse Enterprises. I spent all this year working with them on *Night Music*. They're just the most wonderful people to work with. Their faith in the project, their trust in me as an artist, their encouragement, their intention of making it the best looking book they possibly can just makes everything worthwhile.

I could find myself making concessions to them easier than I could making concessions to a larger publisher because they don't ask anything flippantly. If they ask for something then it really needs to be done. I found myself being very concerned with them as being a publisher, in a way that I wasn't concerned about Marvel. Although I'm more responsible now, at the time I did War of the Worlds I wasn't concerned about deadlines and late charges because I didn't feel I was getting that much concern in return. With Eclipse, and with Friedrich in *Star*Reach*, I was very concerned about getting things in on deadlines so they could go ahead with their end of the deal. When concern like that is expressed on their part I would just fall all over myself to try and return it, but it has to be there in the first place for me to respond like that.

Whizzard: Did deadlines present any serious problems on Killraven?

Russell: Enormous problems. (laughter) I was much slower at that time, but McGregor was even slower than I was. He's about the slowest writer in the business. He's legendary. In a way that covered a great deal for my slowness because I could always say, "Well, Don hasn't finished his script." That actually gave me the time to finish my work. So I may have been two weeks late, but he would be two weeks and a day late. (laughter) I never looked quite as bad.

It was rough. I just couldn't turn out a bi-monthly book. Now I have more facilities and a little more discipline; I can now. But then, I really didn't care that much as far as deadlines go because of the personalities involved. I never gave anything less than my best, I just wasn't giving it as many hours per day.

Whizzard: How many hours per day were you dedicating to it?

Russell: That's almost impossible to say because I would work for a few days and then I would take a few days off. I would work an hour, take a few hours off, and then go back and doodle at it. It's with you from morning to night; it's not like a nine to five job. When I'm watching films, concerts, ballet, or opera I'm always gleaning bits from it that eventually surface in my work. It never stops. Sometimes I wish I could turn it off by pressing a button that says, "You'll stop thinking about it now." But it doesn't work. (laughter) It's a continuous process. When someone asks me that question, it's very hard to answer, but I'm at it constantly seven days a week.

Whizzard: When you were drawing covers, were you provided with a finished script to base it on?

Russell: No, I designed them myself. I would take in a layout, finish about half of the art, and show it to the art director. I think I usually came up with the ideas myself, although Don did sometimes too. Usually I would take in cover sketches to Romita and we would work them out, and then I would do the finished drawing. I would initiate the cover and if it wasn't acceptable we would go over it again.

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(c) 1980 P. Craig Russell

Whizzard: With the Killraven books, how much influence did the production staff or the editors have over the cover material?

Russell: That was the only hassle I had with them in the years that I was there. There were too many books for them to fiddle around with the insides--not so with the covers. Some times Romita would take a piece of paper and put it over the cover and show me ways to change a person's head or leg. Compositionally they were really nice and I learned a few things from that.

Then they got into repetitive, deadening formulas. The hero almost always had to look like he was being beaten. The villain had to be in the ascendency. It was just unbelievable after a while. If you look at the Marvel covers in the sixties that was not always true. There were some very innovative and creative covers.

They were constantly making changes on the covers that I did.So many of them were obvious changes. You can see the heavier brush stroke in them. It really marred the covers. So that was the only really constantly aggravating thing that I ran into.

Whizzard: Occasionally, the covers would clash with material inside the issue. For instance, Carmilla's dialog on the cover of "Red Dust Legacy" never appeared in the issue. Was that something within your control?

Russell: Perfect example. No, that wasn't in my control. Once I did the cover they applied the copy. I did the finished cover on that book and they didn't feel there was enough action on it. It was basically that same layout with Killraven in the foreground and Carmilla coming at him with the knife. That scene is on the inside of the book, when she comes at him with the knife, on page twenty-seven.

Whizzard: But the dialog seemed inappropriate.

Russell: Right. The dialog has nothing to do with it,and he's not being snatched up by the Martians. In my original cover they were only coming towards him. But they wanted more drama, they wanted him at the mercy of almost everything in the world. It was the hardest cover I had ever done because Marv Wolfman, Len Wein, John Romita and everyone else had their finger in the pie. It finally came to the point where I was saying that I was going to get it exactly right if it was the last thing I was going to do. I would never go through that again. I would just say, "Find someone else to do it." It was a case where the cover had little to do with the inside and it was just done to fulfill a formula.

Whizzard: At times there would be cover captions which presumably would be for story titles, but rarely were. "Only the Computer Shows Me Any Respect" was changed to "Monster of the Mind Machine" which is rather--

Russell: --awful. They never used Don's titles on the covers because they didn't like them. They were always giving him trouble about that. They wanted a more punchier title. I tried to ignore all that as much as I could.

The last issue they called "Final Glory" instead of "Morning After Mourning Prey", although I kind of liked "Final Glory". It was appropriate for the last book in the series. It was very rare that they would come up with something I was happy with.

Whizzard: Do you have anything to say about the use of colors?

Russell: Not much, except the reproduction is just terrible. I prefer to color my own work, although what you're doing when you color for those comics is really just providing a color code for the engraver to provide the colors. You can't do any special effects at all.

If you could see the difference between the artist's original and the way it looks when it's printed on the newsprint paper, there's just no comparison. You can do some brilliant effects on the original which just don't come off.

Whizzard: It seems like your color range would be terribly limited.

Russell: Very limited. You've got about sixty colors to work with. It sounds okay until you start getting into atmospheric effects. There's just thousands of colors in the spectrum to use. It can present a challenge; any set of restrictions can present a challenge. You just have to ask yourself how long you want to submit to it.

Whizzard: Do you consider the colorists talents in themselves?

Russell: Absolutely. Bad coloring can destroy a good comic. It can just really ruin it. I have had some bad colorists, which is why I've started coloring myself. It's very important. Even if the reproduction is bad, still, the colors you use make a great difference.

Whizzard: There was a scene in "The Day the Monuments Shattered!" where Carmilla and M'Shulla kiss, which was suppose to originally have been done in knock-out. Was its failure to be colored in this manner intentional by Goldberg and you or was it simply the result of an editorial oversight?

Russell: Petra colored that book and decided to ignore it. They said do it in knock-out, which was ridiculous. So we didn't and it got through. I don't really know how it got through. Everything with us was so late that they didn't have time to diddle with it, to make any but the most obvious changes. So that one slipped by.

They made such a fuss about it. They said they wouldn't put it on the stands down South, but when Don convinced them to finally let us do it they said "don't make it a big full-page thing," which is ridiculous because it wasn't that important to the story, it was just a character development. To make it a full-page thing just wouldn't make any sense. That's how frightened they were of it. Then they were saying to do it in a knock-out color, which wasn't done. No one got excited. It wasn't yanked off the stands or anything like that.

Whizzard: Was Marvel's hesitancy about presenting an interracial romance in any way supported by the mail?

Russell: No, I don't remember that at all, except that it was mostly congratulatory. We didn't get any hate mail. I read most of the letters and I think I would have recalled anything that came in negative.

Although, there was another artist up at the office who said he would never touch a story like that. It floored us completely. It seems that any racial feeling about the story was not on any imaginary newsstand down South, but it was up in the office.

Whizzard: Who conceived the murdering of Hawk and Grok in "A Death in the Family"?

Russell: That was all Don's. It was a fun sequence to do. When I finished it, Don decided to let it go without a script. It made it go faster, which was

an effect that was needed. Any dialog or wordage could have slowed it up, and would have lessened the impact. Very wisely he let the pictures speak for it.

In the letters we found that many people had thought that it was Old Skull that was killed earlier in the book--Old Skull and Hawk. They weren't considering Grok as one of the characters. When Old Skull appeared as usual in the next issue we started getting letters saying, "What's going on here? What's he doing back?" Some people were really confused. That confused us because we thought it was very clear what had happened, that Hawk and Grok were both killed.

It's fun when you can do a sequence like that because it's a little unusual to lose a character. It's just not done very often. I usually find I can draw better in scenes like that because it's a little different and a little more challenging to do. I thought that it was one of the better sequences within the entire series.

Whizzard: When your artwork was edited, was it generally returned to be redrawn or were modifications simply put on by the production staff?

Russell: The only time I ran into any problem with that was on the "Arena Kill" issue where I had inked one page, a nine panel fight sequence, which I had worked on for about a week. To work for a week on one page is pretty crazy anyhow, but I wanted to do it because it was a graphic experiment and I was having fun with it.

It was a flashback where Killraven was wearing his old costume that he hadn't worn in a couple of years and probably would never wear again. When I finished that I took it into the office and an assistant editor decided that Killraven's costume wasn't black enough so he had it sent down to the art department and had them heavy it up. They put these heavy globs of black ink and almost completely filled it in.

That's one of the few times I had ever exploded in the office. I got really angry because obviously if I had spent that much time on it, if there were changes to be made I would make them. I should at least be consulted. It just enrages you when something like that happens. No head editor ever interferred with it, which is what made it even worse. I had never even seen this guy before and here he was sending my artwork to be hacked up. That was about the only bad occasion where they interfered with it.

I tried to follow my work through as much as I possibly could. I tried to do the inking and the coloring whenever I could. If I wasn't doing the coloring I prayed we could get Petra Goldberg in. Even if we did get Petra I always made extensive color notes about what I wanted in a certain scene. I always liked working with her because she always followed my suggestions. Everything else she did on her own was just excellent. Other colorists just wouldn't follow them. If they would have replaced them with something better I wouldn't have really complained, but usually it was just dull and drab. So I tried to follow the things through as closely as I possibly could; it's the only way to insure any type of success with the book.

Whizzard: Did you know where the ads would appear in the issue when doing layouts?

Russell: No, I had no idea of that. I tried not to even think about it.

The thing that was upsetting that way was that they put ad blurbs at the bottom of the page. You never knew where they were going to put those. In one issue there was a giant explosion where Death-Birth goes up in flames and it was an open panel at the bottom with no line. The script was put in by typeset. We really worked on that page. There, right underneath the script they wrote something about Iron Man and the Crimson Dynamo.(#29:22 "From Iron Man's distant past comes his most magnificent foe--the Crimson Dynamo!")

You could not help but go from the script to that blurb. They even apologized in the production department for such a blunder. They never would have done it deliberately but they did it nonetheless. (laughter) That sort of thing would have you tear your hair out.

Whizzard: Have you generally been able to get your originals returned?

Russell: Yes, I've retained my originals. Now, the reason I'm not selling any original work to the companies other than some inking which I've done is because I'm retaining my copyrights. It's turned out to be the correct move.

Neal Adams is now starting a business called Transcontinuity in which he acts as agent in Europe for American artists who own copyrights to their work. He has sold several stories already in France and Spain. Now, if I had been selling my copyrights for the past couple of years I would have nothing to sell. It gives you control to world markets which are hopefully opening up now and would be much better all the way around. You have more creative control. ...There are more people who are looking in that direction now. That's where I think the future of it is going to be. It's certainly not in Marvel or DC.

Whizzard: What initially interested you to work on *Parsifal*?

Russell: I came into the studio once and Patrick (Mason) showed me a prose piece he had written that was adapted from Wagner's opera. Patrick and I have been friends since we were kids. I read the thing over and really liked it. At the time (Mike) Friedrich was looking for a project for *Star*Reach* so I suggested that. I had already started doing layouts on it; I wanted to do it.

Whizzard: Did you find it a more challenging project?

(c) 1980 P. Craig Russell

Russell: They're all challenging. If they aren't, you have to make them. If it's not challenging it's just going to be bad.

It's the first time in a long time that I had worked with a completed script. He had all the words finished before I began drawing it. I could really integrate the words into the pictures which I had never been really able to do before. A lot of times in Killraven and *Dr. Strange* the words really covered up the picture and hurt the artwork. I wanted control over that so if there were large blocks of copy, which is fine with me, at least it was integrated into the artwork with no clash between the two.

Whizzard: In *Parsifal* there were several captions which were more lengthy than one would expect in an average Marvel comic. Is there any general rule about word limits per panel with overgrounds?

Russell: They don't like too much wordage. It's a shame because I think it can be very effective. They were always giving Don trouble about that. Unfortunately, I was too because the words came after the pictures and no matter how much room I left there was never quite enough room for all the words he would write without seriously hurting the pictures. Aesthetically I think it can be fine if you know how many words you have and you can design it into the artwork. They didn't like the amount of words he used and we were always given problems about that.

Whizzard: How has *Parsifal* done commercially?

Russell: Not too well, mostly because of the awful printing on the first printing. I found myself recommending people not to buy it, to wait until the second printing. I can't imagine why Mike (Friedrich) even accepted that from the publisher. I would have sent it back.

That was what was sent out to comic book stores and by the time the second printing came out all the comic stores had bought their copies and they couldn't be convinced to buy the second printing, which would sell, because they were stuck with all these other copies which hadn't sold.

We may see about publishing it overseas and see how it goes there.

Whizzard: Were you satisfied with the reproduction on the second printing?

Russell: Oh, much. A few things were still off register a bit but it wasn't bad. With Eclipse, they're totally devoted to seeing that it gets printed right and not accepting anything less than the best from their printer. If you do all this work and you can't get it printed right, then what's the use if it's not even going to be seen in the form it should be seen? All that work is going to go down the drain.

Whizzard: Isn't that the first time that there's been an American comic adaptation of a Wagner opera?

Russell: I think so, I'm not sure. Parts of it have always been used as comic titles, such as Gotterdammerung. As a straight adaptation I think it is the first.

Whizzard: How would you account for something like that not being attempted before?

Russell: There just aren't that many comic artists that are into opera. The approach has been pulp adventure heroes and they wouldn't have been interested or wouldn't have been exposed to something like that. I think it's very important to get as many ideas from other fields.

Whizzard: How would you explain the apparent lack of appreciation of opera among comic fans?

Russell: It's the same with the general public, although there is a great appreciation for it. They don't like the sound, the big voices. I don't know exactly, because I love it. It's something like caviar. You have to get the taste for it and then you're hooked. The epic adventure sound of it is overwhelming some times. I would think that someone who would be in the grand adventure and romanticism in comics would find the same thing in opera--the gesture, the movement, the sound, the scope of it. It's just wonderful.

Whizzard: Do you feel you've managed to reach new audiences by doing a Wagner adaptation?

Russell: I think we're getting there because there was an order from the San Antonio Opera House for about a dozen copies of *Parsifal*. That really got us; we don't know where they found out about it. It's another thing to just reach the market that's there. People who follow opera are simply not following the same channels as people who follow comics. Getting the cross-pollination between the two is the trick.

I wanted to follow up on it and see what comes of it. I would like to see what kind of response there would be if free copies were sent to opera and music bookstores across the country. Mike wasn't interested in following that up; he didn't think it would be profitable enough to send out that many free copies. I think it would be a worthy investment in finding out if those people would be interested. I think it's worthwhile trying to find out if it's there and not being worried about the immediate profit. If you could tap that market, if people knew that it was there and it wasn't made out like *Classics Illustrated* (laughter)--a serious interpretation without trying to abridge unduly the composer's aims--in the long run it could be *very* profitable.

Whizzard: Do you have any intentions of ever doing an adaptation of the third act of *Parsifal*?

Russell: Not off hand. I don't know what will happen. I just finished a portfolio of drawings from Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelungs* which is to be published by Schanes and Schanes. That's the one I'm really interested in.

Whizzard: Compared to most overground comics, *Parsifal* had a very leisurely opening. There seemed to be an absence of a very strong, initial, external conflict--no battle scenes on the splash page.

Russell: --no explosions on the splash page with the hero flying at you with his legs five feet apart. The nature of the story was very contemplative and quiet in the opening and that's what we wanted to preserve with the moonlight, the journeying, and the soft forest. We saved the very exciting part for the end, where it belonged.

Whizzard: Have you felt in any way restricted by the seeming demand to have frequent external conflict in overground comics?

Russell: I've been fairly lucky in that respect. We had a great deal of action in Killraven, and I do like a quieter pace. In *Dr. Strange*, for example, a lot of the action was in magic spells and it wasn't in people knocking each other around. That's not my forte, action scenes. It's fantasy, suggestion, science fiction--it's what I like to do most.

(continued to page 42)

CRAIG RUSSELL CHECKLIST...

COLOR OVERGROUNDS

Amazing Adventures
27 15 "The Death Breeders" Don McGregor Craig Russell Jack Abel *(11/74)*
28 15 "The Death Merchant!" Don McGregor Craig Russell + colors *(1/75)*
29 19 "The Hell Destroyers" Don McGregor Craig Russell + colors *(3/75)*
30 06 "The Rebels of January and Beyond!" Don McGregor Craig Russell Dan Adkins & Jack Abel *(5/75)*
31 18 "The Day the Monuments Shattered" Don McGregor Craig Russell *(7/75)*
32 18 "Only the Computer Shows Me Any Respect!" Don McGregor Craig Russell Dan Green *(9/75)*
34 18 "A Death in the Family" Don McGregor Craig Russell
35 18 "The 24-Hour Man" Don McGregor Craig Russell w/Keith Giffin & Jack Abel *(3/76)*
36 17 "Red Dust Legacy" Don McGregor Craig Russell w/Sonny Trinidad *(5/76)*
37 17 "Arena Kill!" Don McGregor Craig Russell Jack Abel
39 17 "Mourning Prey" Don McGregor Craig Russell *(11/76)*

Batman Family (D.C.)
18 20 "The Monstrosity Chase!" Denny O'Neil Mike Golden Craig Russell *(7/78)*
19 "Tomb of the White Bat" Denny O'Neil Mike Golden Craig Russell *(9/78)*

Captain Marvel
42 18 "Shootout At the O.K. Space Station" Steve Englehart Al Milgrom w/Craig Russell *(1/76)*

Chamber of Chills
1 06 "Moon of Madness, Moon of Fear!" George Alec Effinger Craig Russell w/Dan Adkins *(11/72)*
2 04 "Thirst!" Steve Gerber Craig Russell Dan Adkins: plot & inking *(1/73)*

Conan
21 20 "The Monster of the Monoliths!" Roy Thomas Barry Smith w/Dan Adkins, Craig Russell, Val Mayerik & Sal Buscema *(12/72)*

Detective (D.C.)
481 16 "Murder in the Night!" Jim Starlin Jim Starlin w/ Craig Russell *(1/79)*
482 20 "Night of the Body Snatcher!" Starlin Starlin w/ Craig Russell *(3/79)*

Doctor Strange
34 17 "A Midsummer's Nightmare!" Ralph Macchio Tom Sutton w/Craig Russell *(4/79)*

Doctor Strange Annual
1 35 "...And There Will Be Worlds Anew!" Marv Wolfman Craig Russell + co-plot & colors *(1976)*

Fear
23 15 "Alone Against Arcturus!" Steve Gerber Craig Russell Vinnie Colletta *(8/74)*
24 15 "Return to Terror!" Steve Gerber Craig Russell Jack Abel *(10/74)*
25 "Earthsblood" Steve Gerber C. Russell Jack Abel

Giant-Size Master of Kung-Fu
1 08 "Frozen Past, Shattered Memories" Doug Moench CR CR

Ironman
62 19 "Whiplash Returns!" Mike Friedrich Craig Russell w/Mike Esposito Frank Giacoia art assist by John Romita *(9/73)*

Jungle Action
13 15 "The God Killer" Don McGregor Billy Graham Craig Russell *(1/75)*

Journey Into Mystery (2nd series)
4 04 "The Price is Flight!" Steve Gerber Craig Russell Dan Adkins: plot & inking *(4/73)*

Marvel Feature
7 20 "Paranoia Is: The Para-Man!" Mike Friedrich Craig Russell w/Dan Adkins & Mark Kersey *(1/73)*
8 04 "Prelude to Disaster!" Mike Friedrich Craig Russell & Jim Starlin Jimmy Janes *(3/73)*
9 20 "...The Killer is My Wife!" Mike Friedrich Craig Russell Frank Bolle *(5/73)*
10 11 "Any-Man No More!" Mike Friedrich Craig Russell Frank Chairamonte *(7/73)*

Marvel Premiere
7 20 "The Shadows of the Starstone!" Gardner Fox Craig Russell Mike Esposito, Frank Giacoia, and Dave Hunt

Son of Satan
4 "Cloud of Witness" John David Warner Craig Russell w/Sonny Trinidad *(6/76)*
5 "Assassin's Mind" John David Warner Craig Russell w/Sonny Trinidad *(8/76)*

Tarzan
29 17 "Adrift" Bill Mantlo Sal Buscema w/Craig Russell

MAGAZINES

Savage Tales (Marvel)
4 02 The inside front and backcover are used to present a pin-up of Conan by Craig Russell *(5/74)*

FANZINES, ETC.

Contemporary Pictorial Literature
7 portfolio/interview/illos
8 page 7: Craig inks an illustration of the old and new style Iron Man by Dennis Fujitake *(1974)*

Imagine
2 "Avatar and Chimera" Craig Russell
3 "Chapter Two" (Avatar) Craig Russell

The Journal
16 01 11" x 17" backcover drawing of Conan *(12/74)*

Parsifal
1 11 "Parsifal/Part III: His Victory" Patrick C. Mason P. Craig Russell (also reprints part I & II from *Star*Reach* 8 & 10 with Craig Russell colors) *(5/78)*

REH: Lone Star Fictioneer
3 page 39: character from Howard's *Tigers of the Sea*

*Star*Reach*
8 10 "Parsifal/Part I: His Journey" Patrick C. Mason P. Craig Russell adapted from the opera by Richard Wagner *(1977)*
10 10 "Parsifal/Part II" Patrick C. Mason P. Craig Russell *(1977)*

Whizzard
13 drawings from the Roy Thomas/Craig Russell adaptation of Michael Moorcock's *Elric* *(1980)*

Witzend
10 01 a sorcerer and sorceress battle it out for one page

PORTFOLIOS

Chimera
10 B&W plates reproduced from pencils -- 11 x 17"
Curse of the Ring *(1980)*

COVER ART

Overground/Marvel

Amazing Adventures 28 (*1/75*) 29 (*3/75*), 30 (*5/75*), 31 (*7/75*), 32 (*9/75*), 33 inks by John Romita (*11/75*),34 (*1/76*) 35 (*3/76*), 36 (*5/76*), 37 (*7/76*), 39 (*11/76*)

Fanzines, etc.

Buyers Guide For Comic Fandom w/Dan Adkins, featuring a limited view of the Marvel universe
Contemporary Pictorial Literature 7, featuring Dr Strange reproduced from the pencils.
Imagine 1, 2, 6 (back cover)
Parsifal 1 *(1978)*
*Star*Reach* 8 *(1977)*

MISCELLANEOUS

Night Music
44 2 b&w stories, CR script & art, color covers *(1979)*
Science Fiction Fantasy Stories by Jack London
6 full-page illos, pen & ink; 1 full-color fold-out; and color dust-wrapper design; 120 pgs., 6" x 9" *(1978)*
Weird Heroes (vol. 7)
Weird Heroes (vol. 8)
3 drawings (pgs. 151, 165, 174)

Trading Words with TIM CONRAD

(c) 1980 Tim Conrad

Tim Conrad has been criticized as "just a Barry Smith imitator" but such an assessment overlooks important considerations in his work. Indeed, Smith has been a major influence for Conrad, but his drawing style also incorporates such diverse influences as Lou Fine and Jim Steranko. Combined with a brilliant sense of color all his own, Conrad's eclecticism is, in fact, delightfully original. The following interview was conducted on December 9, 1979, by Jerry E. Durrwachter with research assistance from Becky Reece.

Whizzard: How is Almuric progressing?

Conrad: Just this week I finished the first episode. It's all pencilled, inked, and colored. I haven't received the lettered script yet, which I have to paste down on the finished artwork. That's all we're waiting for. The second episode I just got in the mail today to start coloring.

Whizzard: Will all the episodes of Almuric be in color?

Conrad: As far as I know except for the first nine pages of the first episode which is not exactly black and white; it's black and blue. It's kind of like a monochrome. After the introduction the rest of it is in full-color.

Whizzard: Will that be appearing in the first issue of *Epic*?

Conrad: It was originally scheduled for that. They fired Rick Marschall and hired Archie Goodwin real quick just as the first issue was getting ready to go through. There was a misunderstanding somewhere within that confusion, and so it didn't get into the first issue. It will start in the second issue.

Whizzard: Will Rick Marschall's departure have any effect with you doing work for *Epic* in the future?

Conrad: I've never talked to Rick Marschall. I don't know Rick Marschall. With Almuric, first it was just Roy (Thomas) and I dealing with it for a long time. When *Epic* came along I talked to Jim Shooter a few times. By the time it got around to when I needed to talk to the editor Archie was in charge. I never had the pleasure of talking to Rick.

Whizzard: How long has Almuric been in production?

Conrad: Three or four years. It's got to be some kind of weird record. This is the first full-fledged comic I have ever done. I didn't realize how much was involved when I started. I wanted to do it as well as I could and wound up taking a lot longer than I thought. Hopefully it will be worth the wait.

Whizzard: Were your illustrations in *Collectors' Dream* #1 used in the Almuric story?

Conrad: I had some xerox copies of some of the pencils. I gave those copies to a friend of mine back then because he wanted to practice inking. Those are his inks on my xeroxed pencils. That's barely what it's going to look like. In *Epic*, the actual pages I inked, but the pencils remain the same.

Whizzard: They seemed to resemble Mike Kaluta's work.

Conrad: (laughter) Throughout the course of Almuric, especially in the first couple of episodes, you'll see everybody in there who has ever been in comics. If you look close enough I don't think there's anybody's influence you won't find.

Whizzard: Will we see any more Lou Fine in there?

Conrad: You'll see mainly Lou Fine in the first issue.

Whizzard: The subscription ad that appeared in *Savage Sword* #4 seemed to strongly resemble Fine.

Conrad: Wow! That really freaks me out that you're saying that to me now. At the time I did that drawing I had never seen Lou Fine's work. The only thing I knew about Lou Fine was what Steranko had said in his *History of Comics*; there's a couple of pictures in there. It was about a year after that drawing that I got a copy of Dynapubs' *Special Edition Series* #2 with the Fine material. I studied the hell out of that. I just borrowed and swiped everywhere I could in the first episode of Almuric. (laughter) Lou Fine just really blows me away.

Whizzard: Was the similarity to John Carter a factor for Almuric not being released as a color comic?

Conrad: This is purely speculation on my part. I never really asked about that directly but it's obvious to one and all that I'm not the kind of guy that can do a monthly comic book. I can't get it done that fast, and I don't want to do that. So whatever I do with Almuric it has to have some kind of format other than a monthly series.

Epic will be quarterly. As I got to the inking stage the artwork is so meticulously detailed that it wouldn't carry very well on regular comic book stock and on those kind of production values. The line work would be lost. It has its disadvantages too because the story was inked with that in mind--that it was going to be a regular comic book. From the point of view of the type of work that should be done for something like *Epic* this story is over-inked. I'm trying to compensate for that now with the color. The way Almuric is going to finally be presented has changed so many times in the course of production that it's going to come out looking kind of misdirected for a while. The same thing has happened with the coloring now that happened with the pencilling and inking. By the time I get to the fourth episode, I've learned how to do it. So the fourth episode is *really* going to be nice.

Whizzard: Has the change of editors altered *Epic*'s format?

Conrad: Everything changes every time I talk to them.But that's not a criticism; it's just an understanding. Any kind of creative process like this has to change continually and mutates continually until it's actually finished. Only when it's actually finished and in your hands, only then does everyone concerned have the final answer to how it's going to be. Everybody who does anything creatively does that. If you try to fight it, if you try to force it to come out a preconceived way you lose the spontaneity. There's no flow. You lose the real essence of why these things are done in the first place. We'll just have to wait and see how *Epic* looks like

when it comes out.

Whizzard: Will it be printed with plastic plates like the color comics?

Conrad: I don't know. I wouldn't have any idea. I have enough trouble just trying to fulfill my artistic obligation. (laughter) I have to have confidence in people who are doing other parts of the job just like they have to have confidence in me.

Whizzard: When Almuric was going to be a color comic, did you do any cover artwork?

Conrad: Yes. I did a cover piece for the first and second episode. Roy, being the clever writer that he is, has managed to work them in the stories. Each of the first two episodes will not only have a double-page center-spread but they'll have *two* full-page panels. (Episodes three and four have the centerpsread and one full-pager apiece.)

Whizzard: Is John Romita the art director on *Epic*?

Conrad: I don't know.

Whizzard: You experienced some problem with him changing a girl's face in the *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction* story. Are those days gone?

Conrad: Those problems have been resolved. I hope. It would be so much work for them to try and change the style and technique I use now that I doubt they'll try. I hope they don't mess around with it. I'd rather have it look a little bit bad in some places than have some one fix it up to try and make it look better. It's my name on there.

Whizzard: Are you still planning to include a woman with hairy arms? In *Almuric*, Howard described the men being hairy yet the women were smooth and lovely.

Conrad: No, I dropped that. That's one point where I changed a little bit from the book for several different reasons. It made no sense to me. I just couldn't visualize a race of creatures where the men are one color in one way and the women are just like us back on Earth. I just couldn't buy it. I think it weakens the authenticity of the story. The women in this version will definately be the same skin-tones as the males. They're kind of a bluish-grey which is a much nicer skin-tone to deal with anyway.

Whizzard: Have you met Barry Smith? What are your feelings about the work you did with him?

Conrad: Yes, I've met Barry many times. He was the first professional artist that I ever met. As a matter of fact, I went to Detroit one time just to meet him. We began at that time with an amicable relationship which has kind of deteriorated over the years.

I was asked to finish the Bran Mak Morn story when I was just starting in comics. I thought, "Wow! What a thrill! What an honor! What a rush!" Everything about it sounded good so I said, "Sure, I'll do it. I'll be happy to do it." Roy sent me this story and I just went nuts the first day I got it. I looked at the artwork and it was just beautiful! It was the finest pencilling that Barry had done up to that point.

I got the artwork and just went out and got totally blind drunk that night because after looking at this beautiful pencilling I realized there was nothing that this could do except make my stuff look bad. There's no way I'm going to be able to match it. (laughter) The challenge was there to match it. Fortunately, I just had to match it for the tail-end of the first episode because after you get to page ten on the first episode it's just me. I tried to keep up to Barry's level but obviously it wasn't. I hadn't been doing it as long as him.

I was happy with it--for the experience. I just loved inking and toning Barry's pencils because they're so beautiful. His concepts are so atmospheric. They have this real subdued inter-compositional tension that he maintains which has much more strength than the overt action and movement that usually goes on in comics. Barry was the best that anyone has ever been at this subdued inter-compositional tension. I learned an awful lot working on his pencils.

Whizzard: You did something with him later on a Robert E. Howard poem. (*Savage Sword* 24)

Conrad: That was the result of confused communications on the telephone. I didn't want to do that project. Since I'm out here and telephones are our only source of communication there were several misunderstandings in that whole episode which resulted in it even being produced. At the time, though, I thought it was something else. I thought it was something Barry had pencilled that hadn't been published at the time I actually did it. Then it turned out otherwise. By the time I received the story they had a big deadline situation to cope with and they had these pages allotted for that project.

Whizzard: It seemed like the final product came out looking more like Smith than the "Worms of the Earth" story.

Conrad: It was more completely pencilled. On the Bran Mak Morn story the first five pages were pencilled almost as tightly as that poem. Then from page six to page ten they were just blue pencil layouts. The rest of the story was just mine.

Whizzard: How do you go about doing one of the *Savage Sword* frontispieces as opposed to conceiving and executing one of your prints?

Conrad: The frontispieces were just one shot illustrations I use to do for Roy every once in a while for a little extra money. I would have a basic idea which I wanted to try. I would usually find a new technique--I could use the magic markers and do a certain kind of effect --so I'd do a single illustration as an exercise with that effect. They didn't always work. Yet I can't afford the time to practice and experiment at my leisure so I had to sell them to Roy and let him use them, whether I thought they were successful or not. Some of them I was really happy with.

Whizzard: Was the second to last red panel in "The Forever Phial" your idea?

Conrad: That was Roy's idea. The story evolved out of that idea. Roy called up and said--

Whizzard: "--I want to do a story with a red panel in it, have you got a plot?"

Conrad: Right. He was going to call back with the plot. I wanted to work on it so I got some friends over that night and we just sat around and played with the idea until we came up with a plot. Then I took it from there.

Whizzard: On the second and third page you had identical panel layouts and on the fourth and fifth page you had symmetrical panel layouts.

Conrad: In the second part of "Worms" there are two pages which are layed out to be set on *top* of one another! If they print Almuric in the sequence it's designed for you'll see a lot of that again. In the process of drawing comics, I try to integrate as large an area of the visual field as possible. Comics are usually looked at two pages at a time. Just as you have to relate panels in a single page, I think we should also try to relate facing pages.

Whizzard: Will there be any problems with ads being placed between pages?

Conrad: It's a real headache for the production people for me to want them to do this, I'm sure. I'm designing it that way and I'm going to explain it to Ar-

(c) 1980 Tim Conrad

chie (Goodwin) how it works. I'm sure if it's possible they'll do it. They're not going to deliberately not do it. They want to do it as much as I do, but there you're dealing with the physical mechanics involved.

Whizzard: An idea very similar to the red panel in "The Forever Phial" was used in Roger Corman's *Bucket of Blood*. Were either Roy or you aware of that?

Conrad: Well, it's a good idea. The better an idea is the more people will get it at the same time because good ideas have to be expressed. That's the purpose of them. A good idea is too valuable for any one person to be responsible for it. Good ideas are always spread out.

Whizzard: Is there a different editorial policy regarding copyrights with *Epic* compared to their comic line?

Conrad: That doesn't affect me that much with this particular story since it's based on a Robert E. Howard novel; the Howard people own the rights.

Whizzard: When you do graphic stories, would you prefer to work within the sword and sorcery field?

Conrad: Not any more--definately not any more. Almuric is my sword and sorcery finale.

Whizzard: Do you envision yourself doing anything like Chaykin's *The Stars My Destination*? Has anyone approached you with a project of that sort?

Conrad: I have been approached with those kinds of projects. Again, I would like to do a graphic novel or two, but in order to do that I'm going to have to completely restructure my approach, my technique, and my style or it will never get done. (laughter) The way I work at the moment is too time-consuming.

Whizzard: What is your aversion to the super-hero genre?

Conrad: I don't have an aversion to it. I'm just too old to relate to it any more.

Whizzard: How much difference is there between Captain America and Esau Cairn?

Conrad: Very little. But, you see, I can't relate to Cairn any more either. (laughter)

Whizzard: Will the Almuric series end with you?

Conrad: I don't know. I'm doing Howard's *Almuric*. Since Marvel owns the character, after that they can do anything they want with it.

Whizzard: Speaking of copyrights, the work-for-hire provision in the Marvel contract has gotten several people up in arms in trying to establish a guild for comic creators. It seems they're getting more screwed now than ever.

Conrad: Well, what else is new? That's not just this business. Nowhere in the constitution does it say it has to be fair. We'd all *like* it to be fair, but we do what we can do. I'm a very non-political, non-organized kind of guy. I try to fight my own battles. I guess that's why I end up as a loser. (laughter)

Whizzard: Would you have any interest in doing a more realistic portrait of comic characters?

Conrad: I've got a Batman story in mind that would blow you away.

Whizzard: You've done it?

Conrad: No, I'd *like* to do it.

Whizzard: Are you familiar with National's plans to license out the Batman character?

Conrad: Right, I've been in the middle of all of that. I was approached to do the story that Marshall Rogers will be doing. But again, I'm not a very good comic book artist. I'm too slow, it's too hard, it's too much work for me. I don't know how to do it that well, I don't know how to draw that well. I have these other obsessions that force me to do it anyway. The only superhero that I would ever consider doing would be Batman. I'd like to do a Dr. Strange story; I could probably get into that.

Whizzard: Were the prints and portfolios your basic source of income between when your last story appeared in Marvel and your Almuric work?

Conrad: My basic source of income for the last year has been painting. I've been working on a series of paintings which are hung up in the office of a publisher who couldn't follow through with what he said he was going to do.

I've got another portfolio that I've just finished. It will be out about February. It's called "Alpha Omega" and is being published by Golden Graphics in Denver--who did the Frank Brunner portfolio.

Whizzard: Do you use music to create an effect on your work?

Conrad: Yes, I'm working a lot to the new Bob Dylan album, *Slow Train Coming*. I think it's the best album he's had out in twelve years. He's finally mad again; he's got something to be mad about. It's so nice to hear Bob Dylan mad again. (laughter) During the seventies everyone was just sitting around saying, "Now don't get excited."

Whizzard: Have you done any of the pages of Almuric to that album?

Conrad: No, it's not really conducive to that story.

That's another thing that's happened to me over the past year. My approach to my own artwork or anything new I do has changed completely. I'm not doing tits and ass and blood and guts stuff anymore.

Whizzard: Did you ever get any editorial pressure to draw that type of material?

"NOWHERE IN THE CONSTITUTION DOES IT SAY IT HAS TO BE FAIR. WE'D ALL LIKE IT BE BE FAIR BUT WE DO WHAT WE CAN DO...I TRY TO FIGHT MY OWN BATTLES. I GUESS THAT'S WHY I END UP AS A LOSER."

(c) 1980 Tim Conrad

"I GOT THE ARTWORK AND JUST...GOT TOTALLY BLIND DRUNK THAT NIGHT BECAUSE...THERE WAS NOTHING THAT THIS COULD DO EXCEPT MAKE MY STUFF LOOK BAD."

(c) 1980 Tim Conrad

Conrad: There's never anything direct. It's never direct, it's never talked about, it's never mentioned by anybody. We all know that it's there and if we do it our work will be more popular. It's as simple as that. It's conducive to sales. It's conducive to people looking at your work. People like sex. I like sex. What can I say? It will just be interesting to see how people react to my new portfolio.

Whizzard: Is your work's similarity to Murphy Anderson's Star Pirate strip in *Planet Comics* merely coincidental?

Conrad: He's been a minor, almost subliminal, influence on the whole (Almuric) story. I sat down one time with a guy who had a real nice comic collection and he showed me his collection of *Planet Comics* which I had never seen before and haven't seen since. I didn't get to read any of them but I got to look at all the covers. I was really impressed. My emotional response to those covers has been something I've been trying to put into Almuric. I just like the way that particular comic series felt.

After I saw those comics I thought I was going to have to buy some.

Whizzard: Then you found out how much they cost?

Conrad: Yes. (laughter) I bought one for six dollars but that's all I have. I can't afford them. It's really aggravating because the covers are just beautiful.

Whizzard: Have you seen Steranko's *Chandler*?

Conrad: Yes, I liked that. I'd definately like to see more different kinds of graphic stories.

Whizzard: Do you think it's more legitimate without balloons?

Conrad: All those elements: the kind of format you choose, the color, the paper, the kind of story, are inter-dependent. You can't make any flat judgment on any of those aspects and say it's always going to be better without speech balloons or it's always not because none of those are true. Some stories you have to be willing to let the final product determine how you approach it. It's just a matter of picking the best format. The format Steranko used in *Chandler* was the best format to do that kind of story. It's the perfect blending of that kind of story. He chose just the right technique, the right medium, the right layout, to do what he was doing there. It all varies. There are some stories that are better with balloons. Almuric is better with balloons. it should not be done in any other way than with speech balloons. It's a comic book.

Whizzard: It's a whole different pacing.

Conrad: It's a matter of pacing and it's a matter of style. Almuric is a *comic* book. It takes place on another planet. It's a fantasy. It's fun.

Whizzard: Shouldn't the essential element of a comic be that it should be fun?

Conrad: Yeah, they have got to be fun.

Whizzard: They're supposedly fun to produce but it's been said that they're not.

Conrad: (laughter) Well, they're fun but, boy, it's a lot of work. You really have got to work at having fun. Whew! It is fun, there's no way around that. It is fun when you finally learn how to do it and get around to where you can make it do what you want it to do. It's fun and it's satisfying but it's a lot of work.

Whizzard: But you enjoy it--in the end.

Conrad: In the end, I must.

Whizzard: You push yourself away from the table and say, "I've enjoyed myself"?

Conrad: When it works. There's times I pull myself away from the table and think "this is the most miserable way I've ever felt in my life." Yet that's the price you pay for those moments when you say "this is the best feeling I've ever had." It's an addiction. When it works you get so high on it that it makes the failures bearable. I can put up with those bad feelings.

Whizzard: Here's a nebulous question: where do you want to go with your artistic career?

Conrad: It's a definite question, but you're going to get a real nebulous answer. (laughter) It's really bizarre. I've never really considered that but I'm getting to an age where I better start. I've never looked at my art in terms of where do I want it to take me. It's always been in terms of where is it going to take me. I've always been very leary about establishing too many definate types of goals because I always think that is going to stifle some good thing that just might happen to me. I've got a lot of faith. So many more interesting things happen to me if I let things happen to me rather than try to make things happen to me all the time. I get in too much trouble when I try to make things happen. (laughter) It's easier to let the things happen and enjoy what happens to you.

Whizzard: Do you plan to do any commercial artwork in the future?

Conrad: I've been thinking about going into that and getting a regular commercial art-type job for a couple of years. When I get Almuric done I'm going to be free. I've got about a half a dozen options. I'm just entering a room at the end of a corridor and there's six doors in that room. I haven't picked which one I'm going out yet. I'm just going to relax a little first. By the time I get done with Almuric I should know what's coming next.

TIM CONRAD INDEX...

The indexes in this issue were primarily compiled by Jerry E. Durrwachter, with the assistance of Gary Johannigmeier, Keith Tuxhorn, and the B&R Comix Center. Listings are in the following sequence: title, issue number, number of pages of work, story title, writer, penciller, inker, and date of publication. "+ ____" indicates work the featured artist did besides penciling or inking.

COLOR OVERGROUNDS/MARVEL

Conan
47 01 A full pager by Tim entitled "The Dawning" appears on page 17. (done in 1973) *(2/75)*

MAGAZINES/MARVEL

Savage Sword of Conan
4 01 ad art on page 57. *(2/75)*
8 10 "The Forever Phial" Roy Thomas Tim Conrad *(10/75)*
10 01 frontispiece by Tim Conrad *(2/76)*
12 01 frontispiece by Tim Conrad *(6/76)*
15 02 page 50 (Bran Mak Morn) and 53 (Essau Cairn) of "A Portfolio of Robert E. Howard" are by Conrad *(10/76)*
16 01 page 35 contains a drawing of Conan and Belit by John Buscema w/inks by Tim Conrad *(12/76)*
15 "Worms of the Earth" Roy Thomas 1st ten pages pencilled by Barry Smith w/inks by Tim Conrad. The last five pages of the strip are total Conrad.
17 23 "Curse of the Black Stone" Roy Thomas Tim Conrad
18 01 frontispiece by Tim Conrad *(4/77)*
24 05 Robert E. Howard's poem "Cimmeria" is illustrated by Barry Smith and Tim Conrad *(1/78)*

Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction
4 05 "A Vision of Venus" Tim Conrad....w/special thanks to Pete Iro (adapted from the original story by Otis Adelbert Kline) *(7/75)*

(c) 1980 Tim Conrad

PORTFOLIOS, PRINTS, AND POSTERS

The Assassin of Time - 22" x 28" - full color poster
Daydreams - 4 B&W prints w/illustrated two color wrap-around jacket
Decisions Must Be Made - poster
Elric - 16" x 20" - full color poster
The Emperor's Leave-Taking
Immortality - 16" x 20" - B&W halftone print
Pursuit by Chaos - 9½" x 14" - color photo print
Sic Semer Tyrannis! - poster
The Slaying of Cymoril
The Tower of the Elephant 20" x 20" - full color poster

MISCELLANEOUS

Ariel 3 - 9" x 12" - softbound book
Collectors' Dream 1 - interview and early elements of "Almuric" strip
Creation Con advertisement
Graphic Showcase - 3 issues - inked by Gil Kane & Ralph Reese
Illinois - spot illustrations in some issues
Infinity 6 - art on pages 2, 13
Marvel Comics Index -Part 2 (Conan) - color cover, *Part 5* (Thor) - color cover, *Part 6* (Strange Tales) - color cover
Meyers Brothers - Tim did ad art for this company for around six months
New Romantic Art - 12" x 18" - cover entitled "Sister Midnight"
REH: Lone Star Fictioneer - border and heading design - Tim Conrad did illos for the third issue (pgs. 2, 3, 29)
Sorcerors - 9" x 12" - softbound book
The Tower of the Elephant - color album cover

MARSHALL ROGERS GUIDE...

COLOR OVERGROUNDS

D.C.

Batman Family
11 09 "Man-Bat Over Manhattan" Bob Rozakis Marshall Rogers Tex Blaisdell *(6/77)*
12 10 "Dread Night of the Jaguar" Bob Rozakis Marshall Rogers w/Terry Austin *(8/77)*
13 08 Chapter II: "Twilight of the Sunset Gant" Bob Rozakis Marshall Rogers Bob Wiacek *(9/77)*

D.C. Special Series
15 15 "Death Strikes at Midnight and Three" Marshall illustrates a "text" story by Dennis O'Neil which concludes on the inside front cover *(Summer '78)*
01 Marshall does a B&W illo for the contents page

Detective Comics
466 06 "Take Me Out *Of* the Ball Game" Bob Rozakis Marshall Rogers w/Terry Austin *(12/76)*
467 06 "The Man Who Skyjacked Hawkman" Bob Rozakis Marshall Rogers w/Terry Austin *(2/77)*
468 17 "Battle of the Thinking Machines" Bob Rozakis Marshall Rogers w/Terry Austin *(4/77)*
471 17 "The Dead Yet Live" Steve Englehart Marshall Rogers w/Terry Austin *(8/77)*
472 17 "I Am the Batman" Englehart Rogers w/Austin *(9/77)*
473 17 "The Malay Penguin!" Englehart Rogers w/Austin
474 17 "The Deadshot Ricochet" Englehart Rogers w/Austin
475 17 "The Laughing Fish!" Englehart Rogers w/Austin
476 17 "Sign of the Joker!" Englehart Rogers w/Austin
477 03 Wein/Rogers/Giordano do a framing sequence for a reprint of "The House that Haunted Batman!" by Wein/Wolfman & Adams/Giordano *(6/78)*
478 17 "The Coming of...Clayface III!" Len Wein Marshall Rogers w/Dick Giordano *(8/78)*
479 17 "If a Man be Made of Clay...!" Len Wein Marshall Rogers w/Dick Giordano *(10/78)*
481 17 "Ticket to Tragedy" Denny O'Neil Marshall Rogers

House of Mystery
254 07 "The Devil's Plague" Arnold Drake Rogers *(10/77)*

Mister Miracle
19 17 "It's All in the Mine" Steve Englehart Marshall Rogers "Illya Hunch" (Each character in this book was inked by a different artist. These artists were referred to collectively in the credits as "Illya Hunch." The scorecard reads like this: Mister Miracle/Scott Free--MARSHALL ROGERS, Barda--DICK GIORDANO, Granny Goodness--MIKE NASSER, Kanto--AL MILGROM, Highfather--JACK ABEL, Oberon--AL WEISS, Bedlam--JOE BROZOWSKI, Vermin Vundabar--TERRY AUSTIN) *(9/77)*
20 17 "Eclipse" Steve Englehart Marshall Rogers Vince Colletta
21 17 "Command Performance!" Steve Englehart Marshall Rogers Vince Colletta *(12/78)*
22 17 "Midnight of the Gods" John Harkness (Steve Englehart), Marshall Rogers w/Rick Bryant and John Fuller *(2/78)*

Superman Family
182 10 "The Stranger" Paul Kupperberg Marshall Rogers Frank Springer
194 12 "Showdown" Paul Kupperberg Marshall Rogers *(4/79)*

Unexpected
191 "The Dead Don't Cry" Jack Oleck MR w/Bob Layton

Weird War
51 06 "A Canterbury Tail" Jack C. Harris Marshall Rogers w/Terry Austin *(3/77)*
52 06 "Calamity from the Clyde" Jack C. Harris Marshall Rogers w/Terry Austin *(4/77)*
part two of "A Canterbury Tail"

Worlds Finest
259 10 "The Last Hideout" Denny O'Neil Marshall Rogers (layouts), Mike Nasser (pencils), Vince Colletta (inks) *(11/79)*

(c) 1980 Tim Conrad

Comics Journal
39 Marshall Rogers and Duffy Vohland do a Soloman Kane 7.125" x 2.5" illo (pg. 7) *(4/78)*

Fan
1

F.O.O.M.
14 Rogers did a Red Sonja illustration (pg. 20)

Imagine
1 08 "Disputed Sacrifice" Marshall Rogers, Rogers *(4/78)*

1977 Comic Art Convention
Marshall Rogers did an illo for the book (p. 34)

MAGAZINES

Marvel

Deadly Hands of Kung-Fu
26 01 frontispiece - drawing of Bruce Lee *(7/76)*
32 21 "Daughters of the Dragon" Claremont Rogers *(1/77)*
33 20 "Sword of Vengeance" Claremont Rogers *(2/77)*

Doc Savage
5 01 pin-up of Doc and crew, p. 54. *(7/76)*

Planet of the Apes
25 01 splash page for "A Taste of Mutant Hate," p. 3 *(8/76)*

Rampaging Hulk
2 01 Marshall contributed a 1-page pin-up of the Bloodstone character on p. 42. This same illustration also appeared in #4 *(8/77)* and in a somewhat altered form in #6 *(12/77)* *(4/77)*

Slicks

Crawdaddy
Marshall contributed five b&w illustrations to pp. 29&30 for an article entitled "10 Schools *Not* To Go Back To" by Gordon F. Sander. *(10/77)*

FANZINES, ETC.

Amazing World Of D.C. #16 (wrap-around, in color featuring over 30 characters of the golden age)
Comic Reader 147 (Disciple) color
Fan 1
Imagine 1 (1st printing only, a blown up panel from the story.)

COVER ART

Color/D.C.

D.C. Special Series 15 (front and back)
Detective 471 & 472(w/Austin) 473, 474-76 (w/Austin) 477 (w/Giordano), 478 (w/Austin), 479 (w/Giordano), 481 (lower fifth of cover lifted from Marshall's splash page in this issue.)
Mister Miracle 19, 20 & 21 (w/Colletta), 22-24

Fanzines, etc.

MISCELLANEOUS

Batman 295 - D.C. Profiles 26 on Marshall Rogers *(1/78)*
Batman Pocketbook 2 (printed in England) reprints of some of Marshall Rogers' *Detective* work
Deadly Hands of Kung-Fu 32, 33 - Marshall did the "Enter the Letters" logo.
Mister Miracle - Marshall did a 1 page color ad for the revived D.C. book that appeared in many Sept. and Oct. issues
Strange - portfolio - six black-and-white 11" x 16" prints - illustrated slipcase *(1979)*

"One of the better comic art fanzines...often revealing and absorbing with...some very good artwork." *Science Fiction Review*

"...illuminating and informative interviews and exciting artwork." *Robert Bloch*

"This well-established zine gives an in-depth look at that field...Good, but a bit heavy for those with a marginal comic interest." *Amazing*

WHIZZARD BACK ISSUES

Whizzard 12. Offering 48 pages of interviews with Jim Starlin, Walt Simonson, Michael Golden, Mike Nasser; comprehensive indexes; excellent professional and fan art; and stimulating articles; this highly-acclaimed comic issue is available for only... *$2.00*

Whizzard 11. This issue features a candid conversation with Howard Chaykin and other interviews with Terry Austin, Barry Smith, and Jim Steranko. It also offers a Chaykin checklist and a beautiful Austin backcover. *$2.00*

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"This is a fanzine we ought to buy. In depth articles and research point to...a top quality publication" *Fantasy Crossroads*

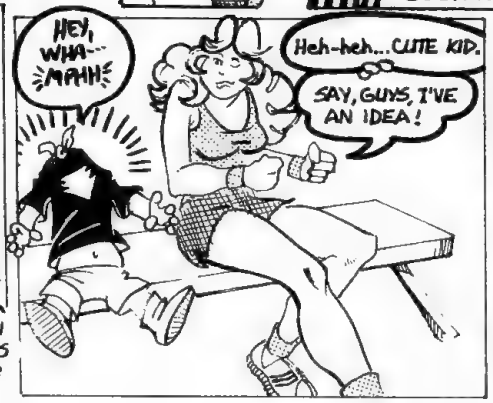
"interviews with...well thought out questions....Definately worth $2.00." *The Comic Reader*

The Untold Story of The ATOMIC KID
AWRIGHT, ATOMIC KID! THIS TIME YOU DIE! OOO-WHA-HA-HA-HA...
WH-WHAT'S THAT?!
THE KID SOUNDS LIKE HE'S IN TROUBLE!
I'LL JUST SEE WHAT HE'S GOTTEN HIMSELF INTO, AND THEN---
I'LL BE--!?
TAKE THAT, YOU DO-GOODER!
HAH! MISSED ME, ROTTEN PERSON!

MUSCLEBOUND FOR GLORY!

SO YOU TWO ARE ATOMIC KID FANS, EH?
WE READ ABOUT HIM, ALL THE TIME, IN THE PAPERS, ON THE NEWS
YOU GOT IT, LADY!
...OR FANZINES, WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING!

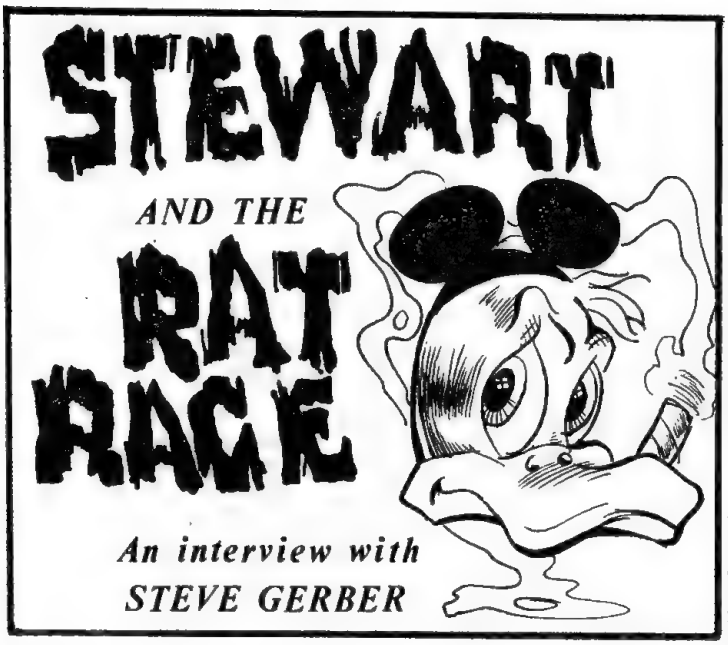
SINCE YOU'RE HERE, CAN WE ASK YOU SOMETHIN'?
SURE... WHAT IS IT?
WELL, HOW COME YOU GET TO HANG AROUND WITH THE KID ALL THE TIME?
YOU GOT SOMETHIN' ON HIM?



IT ALL BEGAN YEARS AGO...
...WHILE WE WERE STILL IN JUNIOR HIGH, BOTH PURSUING OUR DIFFERENT HOBBIES....
AL! HEY, AL! C'MON OUTSIDE! IT'S ALL READY!
HUH, WHAT?
GEEZ, YOU ---LOOK, IT'S COMIC BOOK FINISHED! FREAKS ---
COULD YA TELL ME WHAT IT IS AGAIN? I LOSE TRACK SOMETIMES!
IT'S MY PORTABLE ENERGY RAY MACHINE
WATCH WHAT HAPPENS TO MY RAT, RIZZO!
VOOM!
HE-HE CRASHED THROUGH THE WALL!!
YEAH...ISN'T IT NEAT?
WOW!! CHECK 'IM OUT!
I KEEP EXPECTING HIM TO YELL 'HERE I COME, TO SAVE THE DAY!'
WELL, THIS CLINCHES IT! MY PROJECT FOR THE SCHOOL SCIENCE FAIR IS COMPLETE!
YOU THINK IT'S SAFE?
WHY, SURE! WHAT COULD GO WRONG?
PROPHETIC WORDS, EH?
ANYWAY, A WEEK LATER...
AH, HERE IT IS! FIRST PRIZE AT LEAST, RIGHT, AL?
MISS MANDER, MAY I PLEASE SPEAK WITH YOU?
HEY, IT'S MY SCIENCE PROF., MR. DEVO
THIS COULD BE IT, AL! SEE YOU LATER!
MANDER, I'LL GET TO THE POINT! I WANT YOUR MACHINE AND I WON'T TAKE 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER!
ARE YOU KIDDING?
I KNOW IT WORKS, MANDER! IF I HAD IT, I COULD BE RICH! I COULD QUIT THIS RIDICULOUS JOB!
YOU--YOU'RE SERIOUS!!

DEADLY SERIOUS, MANDER! NOW, ARE YOU GOING TO TURN YOUR PROJECT OVER TO ME OR NOT?
GEEZ, THE OLD GUYS GOT STATIC IN THE ATTIC
Uh...SORRY, PROF, NO CAN DO!
HOW ABOUT MY GRANDMA'S CAKE RECIPE, INSTEAD?
BAH! TRY TO MAKE DEALS WITH CHILDREN--
I'LL STICK WITH MY ORIGINAL PLAN!
CLYDE! BUZZY! OGLETHORPE! HEAD FOR THE GYM AND GET THAT MACHINE!
GOTCHA, PROF!
AND I CAN ASSURE YOU, MANDER, THEY WON'T LET ANYTHING STAND IN THEIR WAY!
Uh-oh! AL!!
YOU! STAND ASIDE!
DEVO WANTS THAT GIZMO AND WE AIM TO GET IT!
MY GOSH! IT'S THREE OF DRIFTWOOD HIGH'S FOOTBALL SQUAD!
MAYBE I CAN BLUFF 'EM OUT!
THE BUSHWHACKERS!
O-OH YEAH!? OVER MY DEAD BODY!
YEAH? SOUNDS GOOD TO US!
KREEGAH!!
BOY! WHATTA FIGHT! THEY PILED ON AL PRETTY HARD, BUT HE HELD HIS OWN!
AND, THEN, SUDDENLY, A TURN IN THE BATTLE...
...WHEN AL FINALLY LANDED A LEFT TO THE FIST WITH HIS CHIN!
BONK!
FZZZT!
D-DIDJA SEE THAT?! THE MACHINE EXPLODES, AND THE NERD CRASHES THRU THE WALL!
MAN! ALL I WANNA SEE IS THE EXIT SIGN!
"SLOWLY, PAINFULLY, AL ROSE TO HIS FEET, UNAWARE OF THE CHANGE WITHIN HIM!"
"THE FULL FORCE OF THE RADIATION RAN THRU HIS VEINS!"
KRRAACK!
"A FACTOR AL KNEW NOTHING ABOUT..."
?
...UNTIL THEN!"
MY AIDES SHOULD'VE RETRIEVED YOUR ENERGY RAY BY NOW! ALAS, I FEAR I MUST TAKE CARE OF YOU!
WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I MEAN, MY DEAR, YOU KNOW TOO MUCH!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT
...AFTER GRADING MY LAST TEST C-MINUS!
"SUDDENLY..."
OKAY, DEVO... FREEZE!!
WHAT!?
OOF!
PLENTY OF TIME TO BE SHOCKED LATER...
BUT, RIGHT NOW--
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, SAL! I WAS SUPPOSED TO RESCUE YOU!
SORRY, GUY, BUT WHEN A PISTOL'S IN MY FACE, I TEND TO FORGET PROTOCOL!
"NEXT DAY..."
WELL, AL, I'VE RUN OVER MY NOTES AND WHAT'S HAPPENED IS THAT ALL YOUR NATURAL ABILITIES HAVE BEEN HEIGHTENED...
...BY ABOUT THREE TIMES!
YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LEAP GREAT DISTANCES, RESEMBLING FLYING, AN--
WHA-!
SINCE I'VE GAINED THESE POWERS, I FELT AN APPROPRIATE COSTUME WAS IN ORDER!
MAKE WAY FOR... Now get this...
THE ATOMIC KID!!
WELL, WHADDAYA THINK?
IT'S CUTE, BUT THE MASK HAS GOTTA GO!
HUH?!
FACE IT, THE WHOLE SCHOOL KNOWS ABOUT YOU BY NOW!
MAYBE YOU CALL SELL THIS TO CLAYTON MOORE!
YEAH, I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT!
...AND, RIGHT NOW --I'M OFF!
BUT, FOR NOW, DRIFTWOOD MISSOURI, HAS A NEW SUPER-HERO!
[Sigh] YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!
...AND SO, AS STAN LEE WOULD SAY, 'A LEGEND IS BORN'!
SINCE THEN THE KID HAS CHANGED COSTUMES, PROFESSOR DEVO IS STILL IN JAIL...
...AND THE BUSHWHACKERS ARE STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL!
WELL, CATCH YOU LATER, KIDS - WHA?!
HOLD ON, SALLY! WE WERE PLAYING 'ATOMIC KID', REMEMBER? I'M SURE WE COULD FIND A PART FOR YOU!
WELL... WHY NOT?
AND NOW, SALLY MANDER, YOU DIE! OOH-WAH-HA HA-HAAAA...
Kanko is an egotist.
1941
RUSSELL IS DYN-O-MITE!
BOOM!
NOW WHAT?!
The END



Steve Gerber was raised and educated in the Whizzard hometown of St. Louis. He went on to become one of the few comics writers to take his work seriously enough to be controversial, interesting, and meaningful--writing acclaimed scripts for Son Of Satan, Omega, and, of course, Howard the Duck. Gerber's current work includes developing animated television series and a limited press endeavor called Stewart the Rat. After one false start, the following interview was conducted by Kenn Thomas on January 23, 1980.

Whizzard: What have you been doing since you left Marvel?

Gerber: Marvel cancelled my contract in May 1978. Immediately thereafter I started writing stories for Hanna-Barbera comic books. By early 1979 I co-edited all of the Hanna-Barbera books with Mark Evanier. These were published in France. I also did a couple of stories for the American books which, coincidentally, Marvel published. From October 1978 to April 1979 I worked on the script for *Stewart the Rat*.

In April 1979 I did my first script for Ruby-Spears as the result of Mark's campaign to have them try me out. That worked out very successfully. I did two *Plastic Man* for them and four or five of the *Mighty Man and Yukk* cartoons from April to August. During the same period I did the eight week sequence of the *Star Wars* newspaper strip. Since October 1979 I've been working full-time for Ruby-Spears on the development of new shows for the 1980 season.

Whizzard: How did the *Stewart the Rat* book develop?

Gerber: Right after I left Marvel, Dean Mullaney called me and we negotiated about doing a book for a few months. We finally signed a contract around early October 1978 and for the next six months I spent writing the script for *Stewart the Rat*.

The character was originally designed by Will Meugniot and we fully intended to work together. Then Will went to work for Hanna-Barbera full-time doing storyboards and layouts. By the time the script was finished it was impossible for him to even consider drawing it because there was just no time in his schedule.

When we learned that Will would not be able to do the book, we started looking around for other artists. Tom Sutton had done a number of really classic horror pieces for the (comic) books and his *Dr. Strange* was excellent. He had also done a *Manthing* story with me that I really loved. We thought that Tom Sutton would be a very good possibility so we got in touch with him. He was very eager to do the book. Yet after a while we both began to have doubts. There's an enormous amount of description and detail work in terms of setting of the story, expression of the characters, and attitudes of the characters in the script. I think this put him off a little bit because he was use to dealing with two page Marvel synopses for stories. (laughter) I don't think he had seen anything like this in a while. At any rate, Tom drew ten pages of the book and, for a variety of reasons, neither he nor I were very satisfied with it. Finally, without any bad feelings, we mutually agreed to do another project later and Tom stepped out of the picture.

We began the search all over again and it took us to Mike Ploog. At that time, he was doing work for Universal and was about to leave for England to do production drawings on *Superman II*. From there he is expected to go to Rome for Dino De Laurentiis' *Flash Gordon*. Then he is expected to do another project for Universal. In other words, Ploog was not available. (laughter) He wanted to do the book so we waited for a number of months to hear from him to see if he would be able to squeeze it in. Finally we learned he was not going to be able to do the book.

There had been one artist who had been at the top of the list from the very beginning, but we figured he would probably not be available. That was Gene Colan. We had shyed away from asking Gene in the very beginning because if he worked with me on another animal character we thought the comparison to *Howard the Duck* would be inevitable. Secondly, Gene was under exclusive contract to Marvel for the production of comics, and he would have to receive special permission from them in order to do a book on the outside, even though it was not directly competitive with any of their products. We never expected Marvel to give that permission. When we called Gene, he was very enthusiastic about doing it. A couple of days later I came home and there was a message from him on the answering machine. "Well, I called Marvel and they said yes." My jaw dropped. I couldn't believe it. I thought he was kidding. We quickly made the phone calls and established that this was true. To this day I don't know if he told them at that time what type of project he would be working on. I wonder if they would have allowed him to do this book if they knew it was me and *Stewart the Rat*.

The work that Gene has turned in is just excellent. He's very enthusiastic about the project. I think some of the anger and righteous indignation that inspired some of the material in the story has also touched him and inflamed him a bit. The work really shows it. It's some of the best work he's ever done for any comic book and Tom Palmer's inking looks very, very good. It's inspired work; it really is.

Whizzard: Gene Colan is working on the book between Marvel assignments?

Gerber: That's right. He's required to deliver a certain quota of pages a month for Marvel. In between those pages he's doing the *Stewart the Rat* book. Gene has been working on it since November.

Whizzard: How does the story of *Stewart the Rat* differ from *Howard the Duck*?

Gerber: I think it's very funny. Gene thinks it's very funny. The publisher thinks it's very funny. Whether anybody else will I have no idea at all. (laughter) We have probably stomped or beheaded more sacred cows in this one than in anything we've ever done. They're not the same sacred cows that have become fashionable to attack. This time we haven't gone after the so-called establishment, or the politicians, or the oil companies, or all the people that one expects to be attacked in a Marvel style, liberal book. We've taken a much stranger stand with this one.

In terms of the social point of view, the tone of the book, the value that it espouses, it is almost a 180 degree turn around from *Howard the Duck*. The story differs from Howard in the fact that Stewart can legitimately be called a hero rather than an anti-hero. The handicap of being a rat is something he worked very hard to overcome, whereas Howard generally succumbed to the fact that he was a duck and different from the rest of the world. That set the tone for the entire *Howard the Duck* series just as Stewart's attitude sets the tone for this book. In that sense I think they are completely different. It's not a subtle point either because it involves the way the entire story is structured and the rat's behavior throughout the book.

We follow him literally from his conception in an aluminium womb, through a cellular stage, through infancy, through a kind of adolescence into an integration with the world around him. It's

like watching the evolution of an entire life form into its maturity, not through its maturity. The story doesn't end with his death.

The entire story of how and why he was conceived is also there. His parentage is very clear also. In the text section at the beginning of the book there is the suicide note of the scientist who actually created the rat. Stewart is a genetic reproduction, a parahuman--half rat and half human.

Whizzard: Will Stewart act as a surrogate Howard?

Gerber: Stewart is not a surrogate Howard. This is the very thing that I'm afraid people are going to say. It is not that; it is another character entirely. You could say that it's replaced Howard in terms of my own priorities, but I don't want to say it's a surrogate Howard because it's a completely different character.

If I had stayed on *Howard the Duck* long enough I think that it might have developed into something like *Stewart*. My attitude in the kind of story, the kind of attitudes, and Howard's own character were changing rapidly toward the end of my tenure on that book.

It's been a long standing joke that if any trouble ever developed between myself and Marvel over the duck I was going to leave and go to DC and create a mouse. That, in effect, is where Stewart had his creative genesis. I don't know exactly, even now, what stimulated the move from a mouse to a rat. Why not do a creature that was completely unlikable and totally unsympathetic on the surface and see if you can make the character likable? With the possible exception of the housefly, there's almost nothing that people hate more than rats. They're the most loathed creature on the face of the earth. That was the challenge in doing this book and I think that it worked.

Whizzard: How has your work at Hanna-Barbera influenced the pacing of *Stewart the Rat*?

Gerber: The Hanna-Barbera stories we did for France were all six pages in length. That means you have to do a beginning, a middle, and an end in six pages, with characterization, a reasonable degree of plot, and hopefully some humor in there as well. These are *suppose* to be funny stories. You learn very quickly how to do a scene in two or three panels and often less. This changed the pacing of *Stewart* considerably.

We had 48 pages and an enormous story to tell. There had to be a very fast way of pacing this story and making it work. My writing style is still very evident throughout the story, but it does not read like a Marvel comic at all. There's almost no resemblence.

Whizzard: How do you feel about your work for mainstream comics?

Gerber: The way I feel now is very good. I'm working in a place where whatever talent I have is appreciated. Within the restrictions of Saturday morning I'm still given a tremendous degree of creative freedom; there is a lot of confidence in me and in my ability to do this work.

From a purely financial standpoint, I'm probably being paid more than the editor at Marvel comics. I really can't complain about that. While animation is not what I want to do with the rest of my life, and certainly not Saturday morning animation, I'm very happy to be away from that whole milieu of Marvel books and the Marvel people. The mainstream of comics just doesn't have that much to offer. I'm very glad to be away from it.

I don't regret those days. I feel I learned a lot from them. I look back on it sometimes as being one of the most tense periods of creativity in my life. Last night when I was trying to fall asleep, instead of counting sheep I counted characters I created for Marvel. You start with *Howard* and the entire cast of that script to something like *Manthing* and the list is astounding. I don't believe it when I think back over the different kinds of characters and scripts I wrote over that period. I feel that although there was never time to do any of them as well as I would have liked, and certainly the reason for that is because there was never enough money paid of the work to justify the time, I can't regret those years.

Whizzard: Do you think you stayed too long at Marvel?

Gerber: I think so. When *Howard* started to appear in his own book I should have begun working on something else instead of becoming involved as I did with that book and still trying to write both the newspaper strip and three or four other books a month up until the time they started taking books away from me. I think that was the time when I should have limited my work at Marvel to *Howard* and then the strip and began working on other kinds of projects: novels, screenplays, teleplays, etc. That was a great mistake and I think I lost two or three years that could have been very well spent learning another aspect of the craft of writing during that time. That I do regret, but I don't regret the work I did at Marvel.

Whizzard: What plans did you have for *Howard the Duck*?

Gerber: I had plans for the general direction of the book but I didn't have plots for ten issues in advance. I knew where the book was going but I was not able to say issue 27 would have Dr. Bong and issue 29 would have the Kidney Lady. I could not have been that specific. I did, definately, know the direction that the character was going.

Whizzard: How has the direction Bill Mantlo is taking it differed from the direction you perceived it to be going?

Gerber: I'm not sure what direction they're taking it is. I looked at those three issues. The first two I got through about six pages of each one and then I had to put them down; I couldn't finish them. I did manage to wade through the third issue because,for some reason, Gene's art seemed astoundingly better than the previous two issues.

Mantlo has talked about bringing out the more mellow aspects of Howard's personality. This just reveals a complete misunderstanding of the character. There *are* no mellow aspects of the character. (laughter) He is totally angry and totally hostile. Mellowness is probably the world's greatest turn-off for him: there are no attitudes that a person could adopt that would infuriate him more than the laid-back, mellow, Californian type attitude. Their attempts to try to sentamentalize Howard and Beverly and the awfully drippy love relationship Mantlo's established is really appalling. He could not have misunderstood the character further.

In a sense, that's why I was so upset about the sex scene. It wasn't because it occurred; the matter of taste never entered into it. A basic quality of the strip was the mystery of that relationship between Howard and Beverly. That was ruined by them making it that obvious and actually illustrating whatever their sexual relationship is. From what it looks like it's not very interesting. It's one of the most standard positions the characters could be in. If I had been commanded to write a scene like that I would have grabbed somebody's copy of the *Kama Sutra* and looked through it to find one of the most outlandish positions possible for a woman and a midget. They didn't even try to do something like that. You got a scene that was not funny, not erotic, not visually interesting, and which blew the major aspects of the characters in the strip.

Whizzard: How would you evaluate the current response to *Howard the Duck*?

Gerber: It's character assasination when you get right down to it. (laughter) The column in the third issue was a very bizarre letters page; it looked like "let's get Steve" month. I don't think there's a great deal to be said about that. It looked kind of desperate and terribly self-justifying. The only way they seem to justify what they had done with the book was to denigrate what I had done previously. It's a silly tactic but it's one that's very typical of those people.

Whizzard: Do you think Mantlo's repeated references to you were an attempt to shake your association with the character or to keep it there?

Gerber: They were probably trying to shake it. The worst thing Marvel could ever do is to remind everyone that there was another writer. On the other hand, I doubt seriously that they were trying to keep me in the minds of their readers. I think what they're doing is being stupid, as usual. (laughter) By trying to look like they're open and free to discuss what I did earlier in the book, and that they're not afraid of the challenge of my fans, looks idiotic. It's demeaning both to them and to me. I don't understand where the book is going these days and frankly I don't care. They've gone a long way to destroy that character both commercially and creatively, whether they know that or not. In many ways I'm happy about that be-

"LAST NIGHT WHEN I WAS TRYING TO FALL ASLEEP, INSTEAD OF COUNTING SHEEP I COUNTED CHARACTERS I CREATED FOR MARVEL...THE LIST IS ASTOUNDING."

cause if I can't have the rights to the character, if I can't profit from it, if I can't have the creative satisfaction of doing it, why should they?

Whizzard: Would one of the things you attack in *Stewart the Rat* be the way Marvel is currently handling *Howard*?

Gerber: No, there's nothing like that. It is a story that is totally independent from anything that has to do with Marvel. Marvel is not dealt with in the story at all. There are no characters that are suppose to be Stan Lee or Jim Shooter.

The story has to do with the collapse of the center of American society: the politics, the attitudes, the middle class,the glue and the fabric that holds a society together. While they're busy in *Howard the Duck* at this point still hanging the middle class, what we're saying in *Stewart the Rat* is that there is no middle class. It's gone. What we're dealing with now is a free-floating mass of semi-affluent people wh o no longer have a family structure or a value system or any reliable institutions to cling to. They have become, in effect, a very dangerous force because of this twisted concept of individuality that's been promoted recently. That is what *Stewart* is about.

Whizzard: It seems that *Howard the Duck* manifests that warped concept of individuality.

Gerber: I think so. What is wrong with the duck now is a reflection of that. At the time that character was created he was a very individual character. It was the product of an individual writer, not easily transferred to another writer. Other people have tried to do it and even the people that came close to doing it well did not get the whole character. In the Las Vegas story Mark (Evanier) had a scene in which Howard was actually going along with this phony telethon consenting to cheat the public. Apparently, Mark had gotten the idea from some other story I had done that Howard was willing to participate in a con scheme, but that is not true. The character's values were very particular. He would have had no qualms about conning General Motors but he never would have conned the public. He would have no qualms about conning and scheming against a villain but never an individual, never an innocent party.

In one of those pseudo-interviews in the treasury edition we talked about the difference between the hero and the antihero.The difference between Robin Hood and the antihero of today is the difference between a poet and a vulture. Howard was never a vulture.

The problem I think is that Mantlo is trying to make that character conform to what now seems acceptable values to the established institutions, to sexual relations, to everything from the energy crisis to labor unions. The harder he tries the further he gets away from the character; he never had anything to do with that. It was one individual's point of view. This is something I don't think Mantlo understands. I believe his major problem with that character is that Bill Mantlo politically is a communist. He is a party member. This is not meant as denigration, but if you're aware at all of that ideology and how it works, the communist line is based on the collective and not the individual. It's based on the assumption that one human being, in this case one duck, cannot influence the course of history and events. Such changes can only be brought about by the action of the masses. Someone who holds that view cannot write *Howard the Duck*. They would not understand the character. They would not believe him. He's too individual for that. Howard is not a joiner and wouldn't be. He hates any group more than two people. (laughter) He even has difficulty with two.

Whizzard: In the black and white magazine he's always hanging around with a group of six or seven people.

Gerber: They were always intended to be casual acquaintances to walk in and out of the story and never as a regular group. The whole thing was never intended to be set up that way. It's not the *Avengers*.

I think someone who has a real serious belief in that ideology, and I'm not trying to deprive him of his political beliefs or hang him for that but anyone who comes out of that political background, I don't think could ever understand *Howard the Duck* or that particular type of satire. What you're getting is *Mad* magazine or some of the pseudosocialist humor you sometimes get in the *National Lampoon*. It has nothing to do with Howard at all.

Whizzard: Has your previous comic book work helped you with projects for Ruby-Spears?

Gerber: I think all these experiences together--my work at Marvel, my work at Hanna-Barbera, and the *Stewart the Rat* book--have all combined very neatly in the Ruby-Spears projects. I did learn something about handling straight funny animal characters at Hanna-Barbera that I could apply directly to Saturday morning animation. The amount and kind of violence and the type of gags you can do in comics are very similar to the things you can do on Saturday morning. In that sense, it was a little like a preparatory course in writing for Saturday morning.

I think the work I did for Marvel over those six years probably had as much of an influence on the material I've done for Hanna-Barbera. The way I wrote the Marvel books and the style of dialog had more to do with film dialog than comic book dialog. Sometimes it worked in comics and sometimes it didn't. Basically, I've always written dialog that is able to be spoken and doesn't sound ridiculous.

These are two of the problems that confronts anybody going from a medium like comics to any kind of film. First of all, you have to overcome the mental limitations of the static page and remember that the pictures move in animation. Secondly, you must remember that you're writing for actors and not for the printed page. I think I was able to get past both of those barriers pretty quickly because I think I have a feel for film, and a lot of the work I did for Marvel was based on film techniques to begin with.

Whizzard: Can you describe some of the projects you're doing for Ruby-Spears?

Gerber: I created a sword-and-sorcery series along with Joe Ruby, who is one of the owners of the studio and the executive producer. It is about a barbarian hero and it has a lot of science fiction elements, along with magic and weird creatures. We described it to the networks as "*Star Wars* on Earth." The interest is very great. We've done a pilot script on it and they liked the pilot; we've had nothing but good news. They want to do it. They love the artwork which was done by Alex Toth and Jack Kirby. If this gets on the air it will be a breakthrough. There has never been anything like this done, not even on prime-time and definately not on Saturday morning. It is a real honest-to-god adventure series with all the fantasy, science-fiction, and adventure that we would do in a Marvel sword-and-sorcery book. It's only a bit livlier. I'm really happy with this.

We're also working on a number of the Marvel characters. ABC has optioned a number of the Marvel characters. I have done the presentation on Thor and I'm currently writing the pilot script of Daredevil. This is something I'm doing out of a sense of duty for the studio. (laughter) I do think it is funny that the fate of Stan Lee's characters has been dumped back into my hands, as far as television is concerned.

I'm not even sure if any of these shows will sell or not. I will probably be the story editor on the series if the scripts do sell. It's rather ironic. I don't know if I should look at this as poetic justice or if this man and his comic books are going to be haunting me for the rest of my life. (laughter) I still haven't quite formulated an attitude toward all of this.

Whizzard: Are there any chances for an animated series of *Howard the Duck*?

Gerber: That was proposed by someone at Marvel, but then a person was kind enough to point out that wonderful page that Bill Mantlo did with Howard and Beverly in bed. They decided they didn't want to touch a pornographic duck on Saturday morning. It wasn't me who pointed it out, but I have to thank whoever that was. I'm happy about it.

Opinions expressed in Whizzard interviews are those of the subjects concerned and do not necessarily reflect the views of the magazine.

Batman Revisited

[continued from pg 11]and other complete strangers. (It was *very* lucky for him that none of them happened to check on the unusual first name and discover that Silver St. Cloud had recently broken up with Bruce Wayne, often a prime suspect for the Batman in the past.) Perhaps his depression also explained his lack of sympathy for Clayface III, a very unfortunate "villain" who was nothing more than the victim of an experiment that went wrong. Clayface's attempts to cure himself were inadvertently but inexcusably thwarted by a preoccupied Batman. Rarely had a hero come across as poorly as the Batman did in this story.

The art, however, was still remarkable. Rogers' stint with Englehart had added those new techniques to his permanent repertoire, making him the ideal penciller for Batman. Dick Giordano had recently signed a contract with DC and in an effort to make all the Batman's art more consistent, he was made the regular inker on *Batman* and,beginning with this story, *Detective*. As a result,the art became slightly less stylized. It was still excellent, as Giordano had himself been one of Austin's artistic mentors and had his own way of bringing out the best in Rogers' pencils.If it was not quite as effective as Austin's,it was close to it. Rogers was clearly *the* artist for the Batman in *Detective Comics*. And he knew it.

It was this that began to cause some strained relations between him, Schwartz, and others at DC. He began to complain about the collaborators he was given--first the colorists and then, once Englehart left, the writers. In the light of the Clayface story's faults Rogers may have been justified in his distaste for it but he was certainly premature in demanding that Wein be taken off the scripting immediately. Schwartz was eager to please Rogers, so he traded the writing assignments on the two Batman books. Wein moved over to *Batman* (which he has written ever since, and quite well, although the more mundane art of John Calnan and later Irv Novick has failed to bring out the quality a Rogers would have), and former *Batman* writer David Vern (Reed) was assigned to *Detective Comics*.

But Rogers rejected this writer, too, before Reed could write even a single story! So this time Schwartz arranged with Al Milgrom, whose new *Batman Family* title had just initiated a new Batman series by Denny O'Neil and Mike Golden, that Reed move over to that series and O'Neil work with Rogers on *Detective*. Rogers finally accepted the assignment.

Even so, he had fallen prey to other symptoms of success as well. He had already begun to miss deadlines, with the result that a reprint had to be used in *Detective* 477--not an uncommon occurrence at Marvel, but rare at DC and almost unknown in books coming from Julie Schwartz' office. Rogers was again late on the new O'Neil story so a quick fill-in, written by O'Neil and illustrated by Don Newton, had to be commissioned for 480.

On top of this were the sales figures, which despite the overwhelmingly favorable reaction to the title from fans and pros alike, had not been good since the Englehart/Rogers series began. *Detective* was not, to be sure, a particularly good seller for some time, but the DC executives' reluctance to cancel such a long-running title--particularly the one after which the company itself had been named--kept it on schedule. Then, unexpectedly, the decision was taken out of DC's hands.

In June 1978, Warner Communications executive Jay Emmett, who started out at DC (he was a nephew of Jack Liebowitz, one of the company's former owners who sold it to Warner in the late '60's) but had now risen high in particularly good seller for some time but the DC executives' reluctance to cancel such a long-running title--particularly the one after which the company itself had been named--kept it on schedule. Then, unexpectedly, the decision was taken out of DC's hands.

In June 1978, Warner Communications executive Jay Emmett, who started out at DC (he was a nephew of Jack Liebowitz, one of the company's former owners who sold it to Warner in the late '60's) but had now risen high in the parent company, took a look backward and was not at all pleased with what he saw. He examined the most recent sales figures for all the titles, saw that most were not even making a profit, and firmly decreed that all the titles selling below a certain level were to be cancelled. Among those titles was *Detective Comics*.

The DC executives accepted most of the "DC Implosion," as it came to be known (after the abortive experiment in increasing the size of the books, ballyhooed as the "DC Explosion," that was also quashed by Emmett at this time) without argument but desperately wanted to save the *Detective* title for its historic value. They noted that among the titles Emmett wanted to keep was *Batman Family*, a Dollar Comic that was a relatively recent addition to the line. Why not, they suggested, combine both titles into a comic that would retain *Detective*'s titles and numerical sequence but *Batman Family*'s logo, Dollar size, and most of its contents? Emmett accepted the suggestion and DC was faced with the problem of fitting this new book into its schedule.

One of the DC executives' decisions, once the line was being reorganized and the assignments redistirbuted among those staffers who had contracts, was to place each character as much under a single editor as possible. The Implosion had left Schwartz with only *Batman* itself among the titles that featured the character. The others were: the new *Detective*, the combination of a title that had literally been cancelled out from under Schwartz whose editor, Al Milgrom,was not under contract and let go; and *Brave & Bold*, which fea-Batman regularly on a gradual basis and was now edited by Paul Levitz. Schwartz edited several of the books featuring Superman, so it was decided to give all the Superman books to him and all three Batman titles to Levitz.

Levitz' new *Detective* contained most of the back-up features of the old *Batman Family* title. Only gradually did he give the true title more prominence, introducing new features more in keeping with the *Detective* tradition. There was enough of a surplus in Batman stories, originally prepared for two different titles, so that several early issues contained two of them. The first Levitz issue, 481, contained the final O'Neil/Rogers story that was prepared for Schwartz, a fine tale in which Batman tracked a murderer on a fancy trail.

Yet when it came time to commission new Batman stories for *Detective*, Levitz had his own preferences. He may have been the one who originally discouraged Rogers from becoming the regular artist on *Detective*. Although his work had belied any objections, his attitudes did nothing to erase them. So Denny O'Neil was retained as the regular writer on the series but the art was assigned neither to Rogers nor to the former *Batman Family* regular Mike Golden (who was already busy with his new Marvel assignment, *The Micronauts*) but to the artist who'd proved his professionalism with the fill-in for 480, Don Newton.

The *Detective* issues prepared by Steve Englehart, Marshall Rogers, Terry Austin, and especially all three will be remembered fondly by many Batman fans. Mike Friedrich talked of reuniting the three to work on an independently-published Batman story and even got DC's permission--but the plans seem to have met with a hitch. Hopefully it can be overcome. Otherwise, these brilliant Batman stories will have to remain an unforgettable climax to a classic title's run under comicdom's best editor and very nearly to the title's very existence.

BY MARTY KLUG

The adventures of Killraven, which appeared in *Amazing Adventures* 18 through 39 (1974-76), have been heralded as among the best science fiction series that overground color comics has offered. At its peak in popularity, it showcased the innovative artistic talents of Craig Russell, confirming the popular assumption that a skillful illustrator can often save a comic series even when its scripts suffer severe inadequacies. Perhaps the problems are not entirely due to the negligence of writer Don McGregor, who proved himself far more capable in his novel *Dragonflame*, but such problems may be inherent to the seventeen page comic format. Stifled by the severe limitations of the medium, its creators failed to develop the "War of the Worlds" series to its fullest potential.

Great literary works are rarely expected at the corner comic book stand. Directed for a pre-adolescent audience, characterization is frequently sacrificed to sustain the readers' interest; fighting is far more visually stimulating than a superhero pondering on pressing metaphysical problems. Comic creators, forced by editorial constraints or pressing deadlines, frequently abandon innovation for commercially successful formula plots. Stories are constantly interrupted by body-building and Hostess twinkee ads, and cheaper printing has prompted more simplified illustration. One generally anticipates low literary and artistic merit when purchasing color overground comics, and the industry seems determined not to disappoint such expectations.

Marvel Comics' "War of the Worlds" resurrects the Martians from H.G. Wells' classic science fiction novel, who return with a second invasion in 2001 unhindered by biological or nuclear warfare. After major cities are rapidly reduced to charred ruins, survivors are threatened by starvation and succumb to their despotic conquerors. Killraven, a rebellious gladiator, escapes from his enslavement and aspires to avenge his murdered mother and rescue his abducted brother. With a small band of "free men" he trained in Queens, Killraven plans to liberate Earth after nearly two decades of Martian oppression. For a year and a half Marvel claimed that their series was "based on the concepts created in the novel by H.G. Wells," and although both tales involve Martian invaders who use tripods, there the similarities end.

Convincing character motivation is a problem which plagues McGregor's Martians. Threatened by over-population and an incompatible climate, the technologically-advanced Martian society of Wells seeks refuge on Earth "to escape from the destruction that generation after generation creeps upon them." The fate of man, a comparatively inferior organism, is an insignificant concern if it impedes their own survival. However, the Martian elite in the Marvel universe have abandoned their natural form, which is essentially immobile in Earth's heavier gravity, for larger cybernetic bodies equipped with 'biochemech armor' (issue 27: page 14). It is resistant to the scalding heat of molten lava (36:14) laser weapons (24:21), and presumably the environmental elements. With this development, though, the dangers of a cooler climate become negligible and weaken the necessity for an invasion. They could have easily migrated to space stations or moon colonies to curb overpopulation and save themselves an awful lot of trouble.

Whereas Wells' antagonists were concerned with self-preservation, Marvel's invaders seem obsessed with their perverse indulgences. After existing in a society void of the pleasures of sex, sleep and food it is understandable why Martians have foul temperaments, but such bad dispositions hardly justifies sadism. The High Overlord taunts the captured Killraven with his sword prior to feeding him to a pack of hungry rats (23:15). The Warlord, a prosthetic human, plans to surgically disfigure Killraven and demands he "show us all... you know how to scream!" (21:16) Skar, a Martian cyborg, gets his jollies out of impaling humans (25:1), and smiles at the prospect of providing the High Overlord with Killraven's "severed head...or perhaps I'll bring him back to you... broken! And let him weep for your audiences" (27:14). In Wells' story it appeared that "the fear and empire of man had passed away" due to the military might and intellectual superiority of the telepathic Martians. Yet in Marvel's tale they have the intellectual capacity of poorly trained goldfish and are portrayed as a "writhing, salivating audience" (23:2) which, like debauched Romans, watch dueling gladiators who are trained "to kill for the pleasures of... (their) masters" (18:21). None of Marvel's aliens feel any anguish or remorse for their violence (as one finds in better horror movies), but their only regret is they can't have more of it.

There are two notable exceptions to this rule of poorly developed opponents. The human-Martian hybrid in "The 24 Hour Man," when threatened with impending extinction, unsuccessfully attempts to persuade Carmilla to perpetuate his species. It's one of McGregor's most effective scripts where the antagonist's motivation is portrayed sympathetically rather than sadistically. Yet, like many aspects in the series, the premise is scientifically implausible. "It's much more likely to successfully mate with a petunia than an extraterrestrial," comments Carl Sagan on *Nova*'s "The Case of the Ancient Astronauts." *Amazing Adventures* #39 portrays Killraven's encounter with Mourning Prey in a Florida marsh. This winged guardian of butterflies seeks revenge against his group, much like the Horta in *Star Trek*'s "The Devil in the Dark," when her "children" are unintentionally murdered. Regrettably, the rampant violence of Skar was far more typical of the series, conforming to the narrow Marvel formula for characterization of heroes being heroic and villains being villainous.

The appearance of Wells' Martians decline throughout the series. The two Martian cyborgs Skar and High Overlord,

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who appear in nearly half the series, were practical alternatives since they could visually express a wider range of emotions; a clenched fist is far more convincing than a clenched tentacle. Excluding Bill Mantlo's fill-in story which portrays a Martian as a giant octopus (33:22), Wells' Martians appear in less than half the books of the series. Many of these appearances they simply lurk passively in the background without participating in any confrontation, such as the splash page in *Amazing Adventures* #21. In appearances of more than one panel per issue, their presence diminishes from 54.5% in the first half of the series, to only 18% in the second half. "I felt that visually the Martians were an element that could be over-used and might not continually stimulate the readers. Oftentimes, when drawn, they would look like misshappen potato-sacks dunked in mud," explains Don McGregor. "On the other hand, the High Overlord and Skar had an immediate graphic identity, and the idea of external apparatus to allow the Martians to move about on Terra Firma came from Wells' original text." Departing from their initial concept, Marvel changed the name mid-series to "Killraven, Warrior of the Worlds," only to return to the original "War of the Worlds" logo when sales dropped.

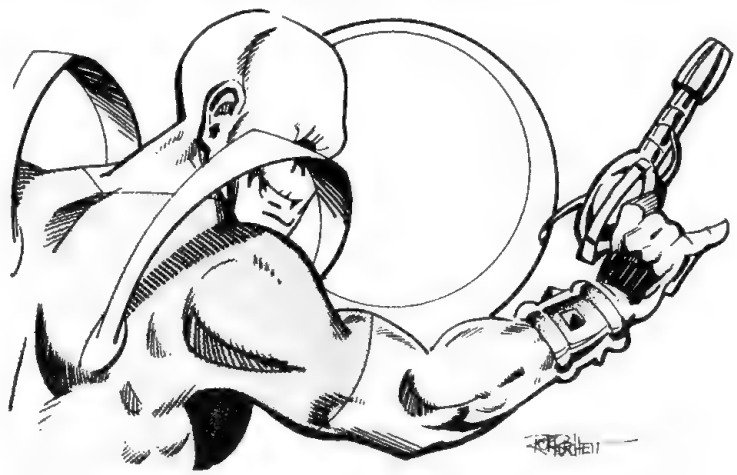
Like the Martians, Killraven's motivation is also obscure. It is doubtful whether Killraven, a self-proclaimed freedom-fighter, is actually fighting for freedom. Early in the series he boasts to "bring the fight home to those tentacled monsters....we've something to live for at last--the death of those who make us slaves!" Yet instead of centralizing their rebellion, his band of free men leave the ruins of Manhattan on an erratic course which concludes in the marshes of Florida. When Carmilla suggests his resistance--spawning from retribution rather than liberation--is politically insignificant, he is outraged. He believes he is invincible. As an accomplished gladiator, he refers to guns contemptuously as unnecessary toys (18:6) and pompously claims he has no need for women or politics. "I feel I could lay waste to the entire Martian armies...what keeper or Martian could now stand before Killraven?" he exclaims (20:11). Killraven dreams of future conquests, and in moments of stress he wishes for "the good old days" in the Martian arena (29:17). "Neither Killraven nor humanity will die by your kind!" he boasts to Abraxas, ironically in the third person (23:1). Such determination one might want in a soldier fighting on a distant front, but one certainly wouldn't invite such a person over for dinner.

Killraven, like most comic superheroes, is a gross caricature of perfection: an attractive, strong, confident person who is incapable of jaywalking, of having tears, acne, hiccups or sexual interest. Unlike comic stories, few soldiers turn into martyrs for the ambiguous cause of 'truth, justice, and the American way' but struggle for self-preservation rather than for political pap. Comic creators are seemingly oblivious to an important fact concerning wars and revolutions. Heroes die. A commercially successful series guarantees the hero immortality; many of the villains even get tossed around bloodlessly from panel to panel always returning like the coyote from a Road Runner cartoon. "I tried to make the readers believe that there were times when I wouldn't be able to bail him out at the last moment," explains McGregor. Defying the comic code mandate that "in every instance good shall triumph over evil," McGregor emotionally destroys the physically indestructable Killraven. His dream of a victimless revolution is disturbed by the murder of two of his allies, awakening him to finally concede that he is "tired of the battle" (39:19). Throughout most of the series he refuses to admit this; Killraven is afraid to show that he is only human.

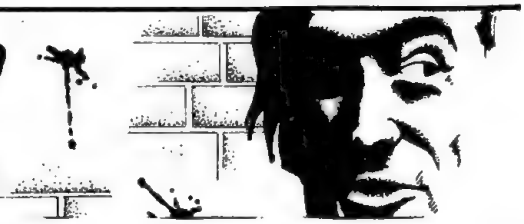
Killraven is fearful that such an admission would undermine his authority, a fear which is extended to both technology and women. He is alienated by the complexity of machines, from starting a car to being controlled by dream-machines. He dislikes technology but the success of his revolution is dependent upon it; one does not get to the Red Planet by simply wishing--unless he is Burroughs' John Carter. Marvel's world of 2019 is filled with air transports, lasers, ionic blades, photonuclear anihilators, nuclear flame swords; yet Killraven prefers to fight with a metal sword and ride on a horse. "That was inherent in the strip from its conception," comments Don McGregor. "It's obvious that the initial creative thrust wanted to minimize the risk of producing a science-fiction comic and introduced the saleable commodities of *Conan* as a safeguard. For awhile, on the covers, there was a mandate that Killraven must have his sword drawn. Later, they made Craig redo the "Red Dust Legacy" cover because he *did* have the sword drawn. Go figure it!" Even the Martian cyborgs prefer to engage in close physical combat, such as Skar in "A Death in the Family," or battle from tripods instead of more distant attacks. The Martians in *The War of The Worlds* also use tripods, but switch to airplanes after they learn to design them. How Martians could master interplanetary travel without knowing how to build a plane is questionable, yet such a problem is excusable in a novel written nine years before the *Kitty Hawk*. It is not excusable in a series written after the *Apollo* program, which persistantly uses the Martian tripods despite their limited mobility.

Although Gerry Conway, who wrote the first two stories, mentions a successful attack against Earth's nuclear armaments, the precise method of the Martian conquest is also left unclear. The employment of poisonous, aerial gas attacks--a crucial weapon in Wells' account--is neglected in the Marvel series. "Material had to be omitted in many issues, and they were decisions I made. Craig and I would often confer on placement of copy. The difficulty was that we only had thirteen or seventeen pages, and that we must keep all the cast visible in each issue or there would be a four month lapse between exposure," explains McGregor. Space limitations often sacrificed complex concepts, present in Wells' novel, for visually stimulating scenes--including Killraven's tedious battles with scientifically implausible, giant, mutated animals. "It does not work," explains L. Sprague deCamp in *S-f Handbook, Revised*, "because of the square-cube law. When we double the insect's dimensions, we increase his strength and the area of his breathing apparatus by four but multiply his mass by eight. Hence we cannot enlarge him very much before he can no longer move or breathe." One can almost accept the successes of a sword-swinging Killraven in a technologically-advanced society; one cannot swallow the existence of a giant mutated lobster with a human face which emits green acid (21:23).

Comic books have frequently been accused of being sexist, and while McGregor has curbed this in Killraven with generally well-developed female characters, his illustrators generally fail to express such concern. The cover of *Amazing Adventures* #27 by Jim Starlin portrays Carmilla Frost clutching helplessly to Killraven's leg as he waves his sword and grits his teeth at a menacing monster. "For most of the early covers, the editor would make the decision what would--or would not--appear," explains McGregor. "Certain generalities would abound as to what would sell books. A



THE ONLY WAY TO SURVIVE



The following is part of an edited transcript of a November 1, 1979 telephone interview with Don McGregor, conducted by Marty Klug.

Whizzard: When writing Killraven, did you have any significant problems with the deadlines, or did you generally have time to develop the scripts to your satisfaction?

McGregor: I'm not sure I could ever be satisfied. A man I cared for deeply, the late John Verpoorten, told me at the time that Craig and I'd managed to put out the only reprint book that went out ...late. But you need some idea of my schedule during those days to understand the difficulties. I was working on staff at Marvel Comics as a proof-reader when I began the Killraven series. The salary was $125.00 a week. The big time! Try surviving on that in New York City. Anyhow, Killraven was started by other people. From their advertising, and from the fact that they had assigned Neal Adams to do the artwork, it was obviously a book they had high hopes for. However, the first book was late, and Neal never was able to finish it, for whatever reasons, and the writers and artists were shuffled with each new book. By the third issue I think they'd lost their enthusiasm for the project. It did not have the look they'd anticipated. It became a book that was considered, more or less, dead wood, and since I was on staff they handed it to me.

As a general rule, if you're doing staff work they will give you some writing assignments. Steve Gerber told me, years later, that he'd been told that they'd given me some books that didn't appear to have longevity, and that when the series died they'd be able to tell me they'd given me a chance to write and that it just didn't work out. This way they'd still have a young, naive, idealistic guy to read over the books for spelling mistakes. When Steve revealed this I was surprised to find they could still move me to tears.

It's almost common knowledge in the industry that jungle and science fiction strips are not big sellers.

When I began doing Killraven I was living out in the suburbs of Queens, and I would get up at 7 in the a.m., travel on the subways to Marvel and get there sometime after nine, go through the berserk routine of editing books until five, hang around until six so that the subway traffic would ease and then head back home. By nine or ten I was behind the typewriter. This raises hell with any personal life and your sanity. I'd write until 1 or 2 in the morning and maybe accomplish one finished page. On a hot streak maybe I'd write two. And then it begins all over again. I'm not complaining here, I'm merely reciting the routine as it was.

Most writers handle a workload of five or six books a month. That stuns me! I could hardly keep up with three books every two months. I need at least a couple of months gestation period just to structure and flesh-out an initial idea, never mind when it comes down to working out the particular nuances of each book. Some writers claim their best work is the one they wrote in a day. Maybe it is. In the final analysis, it's up to the audience to decide.

These books can be like children to you. You have devoted so much time, energy, concentration to them, and they are susceptible to the entire production and editorial staff. The book can be reshaped before it ever reaches its final stage. If the lettering is poor, or the coloring is wretched, if the corrections are made sloppily, all of these factors will affect the final book that becomes the reality and not the book that you envisioned in your mind for all those months. Figures are redrawn. Panels are moved around. Copy can be rewritten or omitted...and it's often done without your knowledge. You see the changes when the book comes out. My feeling is, if my name goes on the book, then I'm responsible for it. I have to live with it. I might fail, I have often failed, but I knew I was trying my best. Marvel Comics could care less, or they wouldn't publish much of what they have in the past decade.

I could not have produced a book the caliber of Killraven without the help of Craig Russell. Any comic where one man does not create the entire package, is a hybrid of talents. At its best, it is two people lending their own visions to a series. Some of my most enjoyable, enriching experiences in working in comics have been working with Craig. He is gentle, exquisite, profoundly talented, and, as a writer, he gave me the respect and encouragement that I hope I returned to him as an artist. When you become fearful of how they will react to what you have written in the offices, you need all the strength you can muster, and Craig often supported me in that manner. I thank him for adding his vision to our books.

Whizzard: Did you have any difficulties on the Killraven series with editors tampering with your work?

McGregor: Yes. I'll give you two examples. There were a lot of changes in "A Death In the Family." First off, I had conceived of the book as done entirely in captions. What I had hoped to accomplish was a narrative that was integrated into the artwork, a narrative that was immediate and subjective, unlike the traditional usage of captions being remote in style and placement in the comic strips. Hal Foster did this brilliantly in Prince Valiant; I wanted to try a different form of this approach. In the office, they were afraid it would affect sales, and they redid the copy into balloons. In the opening horse race marathon they misplaced one of the dialogue balloons and it was placed in the wrong panel. The pointer went toward the serpent-stallion. If you look closely in one of the above panels you can see the indicator lines where it was suppose to be mouthed by Carmilla.

In the same book--another example of editorial exercising that made me cringe --is the moment Carmilla reveals that Grok is her father. She details that her father and mother had not bothered with the formality of marriage, not that marriage would necessarily have kept them together. The decision was immediate that it could not be implied that Carmilla was born out of wedlock and the entire revelation scrapped, but Killraven's pick-up line remains. "I had a mother." Readers must have wondered about that non-sequitur.

Whizzard: Were there editorial pressures concerning the interracial romance between Carmilla and M'Shulla?

McGregor: A lot! (laughter) In the books which introduced them I would have one page where they would quieten and talk about more serious matters than mayhem. After two issues someone came in and told me that if I intended to have a salt-and-pepper relationship in this book I better get myself another artist. (*sigh*) So then I was summoned into the editor's office and the editor asked, "What's this we hear that you're putting this black guy and white woman together?" I'm paraphrasing, of course, since I don't remember all the actual dialogue. I told them I was only doing a Modesty Blaise/Willie Garvin routine with Carmilla and M'Shulla. Sometimes you have to lie a little in these situations; it's the only way to survive. (laughter) I tried to keep a low profile. I wasn't always successful.

Upfront, I want to state, that it wasn't merely the desire to do an interracial situation that prompted me; it just didn't dissuade me from doing it. I wanted to show the sexual tensions and stresses that any relationship would put in the group, plus I wanted to examine two complex people and what they could give to each other positively.

What I had originally hoped for was that the readers would write in and not be concerned whether they were black or white, but that they were M'Shulla and

Carmilla and demand to get them together. When I had that, I requested to see Stan. I knew that I was in tricky territory, but the major appeal had to be on the wide scale of the whole Marvel image and Stan's comments in the soapboxes. Stan was afraid that some P.T.A. member in the mid-South would pick up the magazine, point to the offensive panel, and scream, "Do you want your children reading this kind of trash?" I pointed out that D.C. had done an interracial romance in one of their love comics, and that Marvel had always been the frontrunner for not treating their minority characters as tokens. "It seems like we're behind; it's sad to see," I said. "Marvel is suppose to be progressive." He said, "You're really right, but could you make her green?"

Whizzard: How would you account for the presence of racial stereotypes in overground comics?

McGregor: You can't generalize on this topic because there are so many different types of people and attitudes involved. Most of the people producing the books have little concern with any kind of interracial action and seldom have to deal with it on any level.

When you write material that concerns itself with racial matters, many of the surrounding people tend to look at you with suspicion. They want to know why a white writer is writing about "the blacks" or "colored folk." What's he trying to prove? Does McGregor want to make himself a big rep on this? They feel you have some ulterior motive, not that you are legitimately concerned about the events such situations have brought about in our time and place. At the time I was doing those books, I had recently lived in Harlem, Spanish Harlem, the Bronx, and some of my best friends were black. They were the ones who took me in when I was pounding the pavements trying to sell stories...Billy Graham and Alex Simmons opened a whole new, stimulating world for me, and through that world I became concerned about what was happening in the metropolitan area at that point in time.

It's not the late 1960's anymore. Publishers, editors, and writers feel they've salved their consciences and no longer need to examine the subject, except on a very surface level.

Whizzard: When were you told the Killraven series would be cancelled?

McGregor: I thought there would be at least one more issue. The situation with the book changed almost daily. First it was safe. Then it was in trouble. I was toward the end of scripting "Mourning Prey" when we learned it would be the last issue. We left that issue exactly the way it was with the exception of adding Old Skull at the conclusion saying, "Th-tha-that's all, folks!" Some people hated the fact that we did that and others thought it was the only good thing in the book. So, go figure it out. Let me say that these books could not exist today--not under the current regime that exists. (*to p. 39*)

cringing woman, threatened with some vague sexual peril, has always been thought to be a good gimmick to sell books. It's the old pulp attitude...I think they have catered to a depiction of submission, and often distorted sexuality for young boys, who are often afraid of the complex realities of a real flesh-and-blood woman." Carmilla is originally introduced as a molecular biologist and, although styles inevitably change, one wonders why a scientist is parading around in a tiny halter, shorts, and a scabbard (21:2). In "The Sirens of 7th Avenue" three scantily-clad women try to hypnotically entice Killraven after running their fingers through their hair. Howard Chaykin, who illustrated the first two episodes, concedes that comics are sexist. "Of course. They're little boys magazines. They're not done for girls, they're done for boys...I try to think of comic books as closet drama and cast people...the way they're suppose to look according to the characterization."

Killraven epitomizes the attitude, frequently adopted by little boys, that girls are more trouble than they are worth. He is intimidated by Carmilla's independence and during more than half of their conversions he impersonally addresses her as "woman."Twice she questions his motives and on both occasions he threatens her with physical violence (25:11, 36:26). Although later in the series their relationship becomes relatively amicable, early in the stories he has bitter animosity for her. Trying to exert his dominance he snaps, "witch.... I'll twist your pretty black hair till your lips plead to tell it!" (21:22).Although he becomes interested in Volcana Ash enough to kiss her (30:31), he repeatedly refers to her as "vixen." She is a sexually aggressive woman designed as a cross between a "Mae West and Emma Peel type of personality," adds McGregor "yet there's a sensitivity about her as well." Killraven is absolutely convinced that he is correct in his arguments with women but, to his chagrin, finds himself frequently mistaken.

Ironically, many of the supporting characters--particularly M'Shulla and Carmilla--have more convincing characterizations than Killraven, exhibiting a far greater emotional maturity.Killraven --unsatisfied with simply being heroic--strives to suppress his emotions in his aspirations for super-heroism. Like his Martian enemies, he refuses to rest until his revolutionary plans are accomplished. Yet he becomes tired of the battle. His dream to liberate man from Martian oppression and carry the war to the Red Planet realistically can never be implemented by only one man--particularly on his erratic trek--yet he clings to it like a psychopathic obsession. Gladiatorial victories have convinced him he is physically invincible, and he turns to violent threats when his motives are questioned. Trying to taunt his pursuers, he autographs Martian 'wanted' posters. Killraven sees himself above technology, politics, and women, possessing the emotional maturity early in the series closer to that of a two year old rather than a man of twenty.

Plot development, like characterization, equally suffers from the limited seventeen page comic format. "Red Dust Legacy" occurs on a simulated Martian landscape where Martians on giant turtles charge Killraven. Why they abandon their pursuit or use turtles instead of mechanical transport is never explained. The Martian complex is unenclosed yet it magically has a two-moon horizon and low gravitation which enables Killraven's group to escape jumping like an enraged Hulk. Before taking the convenient escape, Killraven first prefers battling several giant mutated animals in "The Mutant Slayers." Pstun-Rage, in "Something Worth Dying For!" attacks Killraven without clear provocation, and he insists on using a scythe even though his followers are armed with "M-23 thermal incinerator" rifles. Such stories sacrifice scientific accuracy and character motivation on the drama altar in homage of young readers who obviously care far more for pretty pictures than plausible plots.

One wonders if such shortcomings can be entirely blamed on the writers of Killraven. McGregor elaborates, "I've been told by editors, 'Don't give us your best material...just knock something out.' That's what many writers do. They will reuse old villains and concepts and save that special character or idea until someone is willing to pay for it, and the editorial staff is quite content with that, in fact, encourages it. Writers are not encouraged to dare or care, or to express themselves as individually as the artist might....People in power can shape the product that the writers and the artists are trying to put out: things are redrawn, rewritten, omitted--and it's done callously....If my name goes on the book, then I'm responsible for it....Marvel Comics could care less."

Killraven's writers employed an intriguing concept of pitting sword-swinging holocaust survivors against invaders from a science fiction classic. Yet eighty years later many of Wells' original concepts have become cliche and suffer further from limited seventeen page comic formats, editorial constraints, and the sacrifice of sound motivation and scientific accuracy for frequent physical conflict. Despite the presence of seemingly obligatory bug-eyed monsters, poorly-developed Martians, and a pompous hero, the series sporadically strikes emotional chords in effective scripts such as "The 24 Hour Man" and "A Death in the Family." This, however, is more the exception than the rule. The premise of Marvel's "War of the Worlds" series has vast potential, which after twenty-two issues was only partially realized. Craig Russell and Don McGregor worked together on the majority of the issues but, like skillful surgeons, had their talents compromised by working conditions and the patient's fitness. If the adventures of Killraven are indeed among the best science-fiction series that overground color comics has offered, it indicts the severe limitations of the medium far more than any shortcomings of its creators.

DITKO'S new DIMENSION

a survey of his latest work

By Kenn Thomas

Steve Ditko's latest contributions to the medium indicate for the artist a new approach to his work. Instead of fervently espousing a philosophical theme, as he did with *Mr. A*, *The Question*, *Killjoy*, et cetera, or engineering a series with its own cosmology and intricate plotline, as he did with *Shade, The Changing Man*, Ditko's recent endeavors seem to be directed at rejuvenating old concepts of other creators in a unique Ditko manner. Whatever the merits of this new approach, it at least underscores the value of a talented stylist, in terms of both writing and drawing, in a field ever wallowing in mediocrity and self-depreciating imitation.

Not that Ditko is doing a great deal of writing with his latest work. Indeed, of the twelve series he has begun or re-begun since January, 1979, only The Creeper, "The Odd Man," and his series for *Questar* magazine have been plotted by him. Although the space operas in *Questar* allow for a considerable demonstration of Ditko's imaginative visual sense, the other two stories do not stand out as particularly innovative or worthwhile. The new Creeper story (*World's Finest Comics* 254, January, 1979), in fact, is embarrassingly juvenile, especially considering the character's past and its potential. (Granted, the Creeper story slated for *Showcase* 106, November, 1978, which never appeared, sounded much more interesting.) The story, entitled "Beware Mr. Wrinkles," concerns a man with a machine that magically controls the aging process and features such characters as Atlas Adonis and Muscles McGook, seems to be hastily written *and* drawn. Its only redeeming quality is that it marks the beginning of the new wave of Ditko artistic activity.

"The Odd Man," in *Detective Comics* 487, January, 1980, is the story of another peculiar Ditko hero. The Odd Man tracks down a crook called the Pharoah who steals Egyptian relics by covering his victims with plastic globs shot from his plastic glob gun. The character of the Odd Man comes from an old Ditko tradition of weird-looking underworld-fighters, the Creeper being the most popular of these. As such it begs a story that emphasizes the character's differences from that tradition, if any. As it stands, "The Odd Man" leaves a nagging question; why could this not have been a Creeper story?

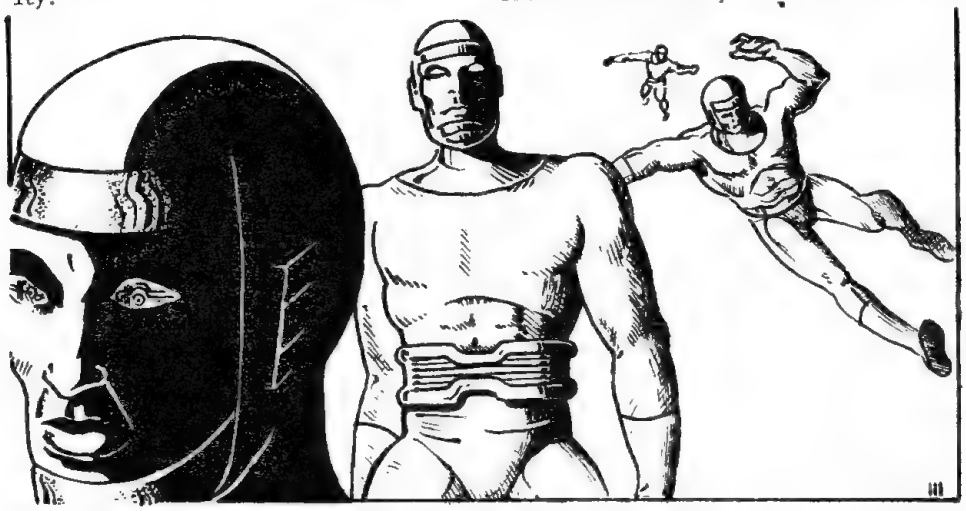
The *Questar* space operas have basically simplistic plots but, by and large, the relationships and interplay of the characters are comparable to *Shade* in their intricacies. The most remarkable aspect of these six-page offerings, however, is the impact of their visual component. The stories are replete with cosmos, aliens, spacecraft, bug-eyed monsters and every space opera cliché Ditko cares to render in a new, inimitable fashion. One just does not see such interesting, humanly monstrous badguys as Zar in "The Expert," *Questar* 3, March 1979, in the mainstream. Moreover, the *Questar* stories, which bear no small similarity to Ditko's "underground" comics in a number of ways, reflect an integrity of the panel that earmarks much of Ditko's work. As pages, these stories appear crowded and almost inaccessible, much like the *Mr. A* and *Avenging World* undergrounds. Like those comics, however, each panel is an example of flawless design.

As a stylist, though, Ditko chooses series and collaborators that echo his general artistic sensibilities, if it can be assumed that he selects who he works with and what series he will do. Ditko more than any other comic talent has explored and delineated the good/evil morality implicit in the vast majority of comics from *Superman* to *Conan the Barbarian*. He insists the supremacy of this dichotomy is fundamental human law and one can expect few variations on this theme from him. What *can* be expected from the writing in Ditko stories is an emphasis on extremely unusual situations and characters that the artist can transform, through the meticulous use of design and other techniques of drawing, into captivating visual splendor, as can be seen in the *Questar* series.

With this in mind, Ditko's choice of redoing old Jack Kirby series is not altogether surprising. Kirby's work in general takes for granted that "A is A"; the goodguys and the badguys are easily discerned in a Kirby universe. In addition, Kirby's specialty is to introduce conceptually imaginative visual elements into his work. The Silver Surfer, the manimals in *Kamandi*, and, indeed, the entire Fourth World are first and foremost eye-fulls of the imagination. There is little wonder that Ditko found Len Wein's revival of the Demon attractive, if only for the stimulating graphic potentional left as a legacy by Kirby.

(For the record, DC Comics resurrected the Demon in *Detective Comics* 482, March, 1979. The initial installment was a collaboration between Wein and artists Michael Golden and Dick Giordano and was one of the most well-crafted comic stories of recent times. Wein continued to write the series but Ditko took over the art chores with *Detective Comics* 483, May, 1979 with a story entitled "Return to Castle Branek.")

Len Wein used concepts in the Demon series apparently geared toward staples in Ditko's repertoire of other-worldly creations. Baron Tyme, the sorcerer-antagonist of the four-part series, is a badguy straddled between two dimensions who seeks the use of Merlin's Eternity Book and the unwilling assistance of Etrigan to pull him fully back into the earthly realm. The Demon, of course, fights to preserve the sanctity of the book and has no intention of helping an evil force like Baron Tyme, leading to battles of mystical energy and magic. In this framework, Ditko has ample opportunity to probe favorite aspects of his imagination, things that have enamored him since before the Dr. Strange series in *Strange Tales* to as recently



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as *Shade*; magic and other dimensions. Wein, whose expertise in writing effective supernaturalism was proven with *Swamp Thing*, deserves credit for juggling these elements through a straightforward, interesting plot. Ditko, however, does not take full advantage of the opportunity, although the Demon is by no means an inferior series.

The best moments in the Demon series are the fight scenes, where all manner of magical energy forces are emanating from the combatants' hands. The "sorcerer's shroud" from Ditko's second installment ("Time Has No Secrets," *Detective Comics* 484, July, 1979) is particularly eye-catching. The three-panel sequence on the fourth page, when Jason Blood/Etrigan escapes the shroud, is a resilient comics treatment of magical transformation; simple but sharp and eerie. The Demon falls short, though, in its use of the other dimension. Instead of the perforcely captivating shapes and features of a Ditko dimension, it offers a netherworld that is not altogether frightening or even interesting. The first glimpse of it, in fact, shows a rather humorous glob-triangle floating in the air. Even the two sides of Baron Tyme could be contrasted much more thoroughly. Whereas Ditko's other "divided" characters are caught between disparate, distinct notions (Spiderman's spider-sense, which made half his mask symbolically appear, usually bedoggled him with a question of action or inaction; characters in *Mr. A*, of course, are trapped between the absolutes of good and evil), Ditko dresses Baron Tyme as an evil, costumed sorcerer on one hand and as an evil inhabitant of the dark dimension on the other. He is obviously a badguy in pursuit of a lesser evil but the visual contrast of his two halves is not as effective as it could be. Still, the highlights of the series, the masterful flow of sequential action and the plot, make the series a pleasure to look at and read.

The next series begun anew by Ditko is another Kirby invention: *Machine Man*. Machine Man first appeared as Mister Machine, almost an afterthought when Kirby ran out of ways to exploit the limited theme of his comic, *2001: A Space Odyssey* ("The Capture of X-51," *2001: A Space Odyssey* 8, July 1977, and the two following issues) As usual, Kirby set few limits on the power of his creation; it was simply a man-shaped machine that could do anything. *Machine Man* is not Kirby at his best by any reasonable criteria but his earliest exploits exhibited in the character if little in terms of credibility (Kirby did not create an entire incredible universe with *Machine Man*, just one outrageous character), then much in terms of psychological intrigue. Machine Man has all the hang-ups of the Silver Surfer plus; both are rejected by humanity but the latter is also humanity's creation as well as its saviour.Ditko, of course, was once more attracted by the series' visual potential: the stretching limbs, the poking mechanical eyes, and the body dismemberment. His use of these gimmicks is quite clever and Ditko has done much more with this comic than one would think possible. There is, though, an inherent problem with Ditko in trying to do a series like *Machine Man*. His drawing style can certainly make the character interesting but it falls short of making him look mechanical. Ditko's lines are too smooth and curved to get a satisfactory depiction of chrome. As a master of design he has a knack for rendering striking spacecraft and limber, graceful people but in combining the two, something is lost. As a result, Machine Man looks more rubbery than mechanical. Stylistically, this is intriguing but technically it is annoying. Nonetheless, Ditko demonstrates his understanding of foot-ground relationship with this series, making it a notable endeavor. The full page illustration of Machine Man at an "at ease" stance on the sixth page of the first Ditko issue (*Machine Man* 10, August, 1979) is a good example, as are the many scenes in which an extended limb (ala Stiltman) plants itself on a distant surrounding.

Although *Machine Man* lacks the mystical and unusual environments of series like the Demon and Shade, and the character is not quite the same kind of oddball Ditko usually draws, Marv Wolfman performs creditably by fitting his writing around Ditko's style. Senator Brickman, the anti-Machine Man zealot politician of the series, may be a stereotype but he is a stereotype Ditko is comfortable with and *Machine Man* does not suffer artistically because of him. Wolfman even tries to introduce some mysticism into the series ("Where Walk he Gods!" *Machine Man* 12, December, 1979) but the result, much like the origin tale in issue 10, is awkward; as with so many present-day comics, too much happens in too little time. Even given the liability of small page counts, however, Wolfman provides each issue with action resolved within the comic as well as a plot continued from issue to issue. The continuing plot, which ends with issue 13,concerns Kublai Khan and his dirigible palace, Xanadu, a clever way for Wolfman to connect Ditko to the Romantic Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his most visually imaginative poem. Fortunately, Wolfman's considerable writing talents have not been misdirected since his departure from the memorable *Tomb of Dracula* series.

In fact, Wolfman's story for the second issue of the new *Tomb of Dracula* magazine ("The Dimensional Man," *Tomb of Dracula* 2, December, 1979) ranks as the most worthwhile yield of Ditko's latest crop. The magazine format provides thirty-five pages for Wolfman to delineate an absorbing, tense plot, flush out characterizations and present circumstances that give the artist free reign to vent his imagination. This story contains all of the Ditko familiars rendered as well as they have even been; another dimension, a "divided" man, and plenty of magic. The expanded format not only allows Wolfman to produce an even-paced, complex storyline but also gives Ditko the opportunity to draw a masterful epic in comic art.

In the past, Ditko has met the demands of the black-and-white medium with a particular zeal. His work for Warren in the mid-sixties remains the most intricate, beautiful artwork he has created. This is no doubt due to the greater amount of space, the "more adult" general attitude the industry has toward the black-and-whites and Ditko's talent with wash technique. As the more honest use of sex and violence improves the story, so does it enhance the art. Ditko draws more realistic women than the saucy, sexy wenches found in most magazines but he does not usually draw them at all, perhaps a reaction against the mysterious Ditko "bondage" comics. In "The Dimensional Man" he depicts everything from a sultry whore to a good-natured, innocent medium. As a study in the Ditko woman, the story excels uniquely. More importantly, the length of the work enables the artist to experiment with the sequential process. On the top of the seventeenth page, one scene is approached in three panels that move not only in time but in viewer distance--the

second panel occurs one moment after and one step closer than the first and so forth. These experiments are as innovative as they are delightful. Rarely will anything like them be seen in color comics. One never finds Ditko's use of wash in the colors, of course, so this story has one more feature to lend to its uniqueness. Ditko renders textures and shades most effectively with wash, as he proved with his work on *Eerie*, and he also contributes to the etherealism, melancholy and terror of the mood in the same way.

Once again, the fight scene in "The Dimensional Man" is the pinnacle of the story. At the end, the Dimensional Man, without his overclothes and flaming with the other dimension that has engulfed him, battles the mystical glob that has raped his sister on an inverted crucifix and pushes the monster into a pit of Hell. The recesses of Ditko's imagination could hardly have been probed more thoroughly.

Wolfman also contributes the plot to Ditko's version of Captain Marvel in *Marvel Spotlight* 10, January, 1980, although Archie Goodwin is credited as the writer. Typically, the writing is cramped once again (Mar-Vell trains every member of an insurgency movement in the course of one page, they all get killed in about the same amount of space) but the story has enough twists to make it interesting. Aside from the shadow dimension and the bizarre Screamer creatures, Ditko is at home here because of the similarity of Captain Marvel and his old Charlton creation, Captain Atom.

The next issue of *Marvel Spotlight* (March, 1980), with another Wolfman script, likewise conjures memories of Ditko's work at Charlton--the near forgotten *Gorgo*. "A Hero Is Also a Man" features the Dragon Lord, Tako Shamara, fulfilling his family legacy of destroying a giant reptile known as the Wani. The comic is another refreshing change of pace from the superhero fare and does much to combine a sense of Oriental mysticism with the funkiness of a Godzilla movie. The Wani, who bears a remarkable resemblance to Gorgo, fights a few uninspiring monsters that appear out of Tako Shamara's magical wok. Ditko hasn't really drawn big monsters since the Gorgo days and seems out of practice but the attempt is laudable, even though the comic's last monster looks like a smear. Also, the tale does not resolve itself with the profundity promised at its beginning nor with any clarity.

The short stories Ditko has produced for DC's *Time Warp* resemble some of his Charlton work, too, his contributions to *Ghostly Haunts* and the like, but more significantly they look much like his pre-Spiderman *Amazing Adult Fantasy* work. Not only do they echo the science-fiction of that series but they also capture its sometimes surprising, sometimes corny ironies. Irony remains one of the few things this kind of short story can accomplish and writers Ditko pairs with are better than most who who work on *Time Warp*. None of them, however, go beyond what Ditko and Stan Lee produced for Marvel in the early sixties.

The Starman series in DC's *Adventure Comics* (starting with issue 467, January, 1980) returns Ditko to the kind of space opera that appears in *Questar*. Unfortunately, he teams with Paul Levitz as writer and Romeo Tanghal as inker. The two seem to go out of their way to make the series intolerably dull and ugly. Tanghal's inking at best provides a few panels with crisper lines than what usually appear in a Ditko book. Largely, however, one comes away annoyed by the scratchiness Tanghal's inking style imposes on the artist's pencils. The Levitz plot and characters are exceedingly uninteresting and quessable. Ditko even designed a laughably awkward costume for the title character--a *Super Friends* version of Captain Atom. The series suffers abysmally from juvenility.

The other DC work by Ditko is notable mostly for its oddity; "Once A Legionarre..!" a Bouncing Boy/Duo Damsel story for *Superboy and the Legion of Superheroes* 257, November, 1979. Like Starman, the story (inked by Dan Adkins) looks and reads like a Saturday morning cartoon.

Another oddity, the fill-in issue Ditko drew for *Daredevil* (162, January, 1980), deserves just a little more recognition. As Wolfman does in issues of *Machine Man*, Michael Fleisher stuffs a long story in a few pages but the effect is even more cramped and concontrived. The art is unspectacular with a few striking sequences at the beginning.

Finally, Ditko's *Micronauts Annual* (1, 1979) stands out as a prototype of a series well-suited for the artist's sensibilities. The Micronauts are situated in a vastly peculiar other-dimension--the Microverse. Because of the unique nature of the series, Ditko pushes his pencil in every direction to capture the essence of an entire universe. He creates weird characters and creatures galore while Bill Mantlo parades them through some not uninteresting plots. As toy dolls to begin with, the Micronauts were created to have a lot of fun with and Ditko does just that--he plays with them and involves them with his fecund imagination.

Unlike much of his past career wherein he made his artistic statements in his own fashion with his own creations, Ditko tries to breathe a new life into old series with this latest work. As the Demon, Dracula, and the *Micronauts Annual* show, these kind of statements are made best when his visions of other dimensions and magical warfare are given ample opportunity to find a place in the stories. Writers sensitive to stylists like Ditko, however, are aware of his versatility and make his vast imagination work in other modes, as Marv Wolfman demonstrates with *Machine Man*. Of course, some of Ditko's new work is also created and written by the artist, as exemplified by the *Questar* space operas, and is quite good while his team-up with some writers, like Paul Levitz, has resulted in travesty. The new offerings from Ditko are a mixed-bag but his new approach has produced a large number of worthwhile comics.

NOVELS GRAPHIC

By Bryan Hollerbach

Is *Origins of Marvel Comics* a graphic novel? Or *Sons of Origins*?

No. Rather, they are episodic, nostalgic reminiscence. Further, the illustrated stories contained therein possess no coherent overview; they do not even constitute a patchwork novel--a la Joe Haldeman's *All My Sins Remembered*--because the word "novel," after all, implies a unified narrative of considerable length.

Similarly, *Batman: From the Thirties to the Seventies* and *The Incredible Hulk* are not graphic novels because, although they do concern themselves with a single character, they do not concern themselves with a single narrative. The Batman's career, like an expanding universe, is theoretically without end; whereas a novel is self-contained. (Tomes such as these might charitably be labeled as histories.)

What about Alex Nino's *More Than Human*, or Howard Chaykin's *The Stars My Destination*? After all, are they not legit novels?

Definately. Nevertheless, they are also adaptations: the novels in question have previously appeared in print in standard form. Thus, these works must be disqualified--while respectfully noting the creative difficulties faced by Chaykin, Nino, and compeers in producing such books.

What about the *Empire* book by Chip Delany and Chaykin?

Perhaps, but some consider graphic novel storytelling superior to that of the novel. Thus, it rankles to associate Chip Delany, sf wordsmith supreme, with a form beneath his capabilities.

One of the classiest examples of true graphic novels presently available

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--and one of the least innovative in layout--is Rich Corben's *Neverwhere*. Generally speaking, all graphic novels feature artwork much finer than that found in standard comics; however, this book boasts roughly a hundred full color pages by the master of the air-brush.

Also in the same strict comics format are Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *The Silver Surfer* and Archie Goodwin and Walt Simonson's *Alien: The Illustrated Story*. In the former, Kirby is reunited with Joe Sinnott and, of course, the Surfer. Unfortunately, Lee is also aboard. The latter, a *Heavy Metal* book produced by the stupendous "Manhunter" team, is beautiful and suspenseful--as well as quite a bargain at only $3.95.

Finally, we have Jim Steranko's *Chandler*, probably the most experimental book of this quartet. *Chandler*, of course, is Steranko's tribute to the hard-boiled detective of the '30s and '40s. It is also just about as close to cinema-on-paper as one can get.

Not surprisingly, graphic novel paper is vastly superior to overground comic newsprint. Of the aforementioned four, *Chandler* and *The Silver Surfer* were printed on what is apparently that nonreflective, easy-on-the-eye board; the *Heavy Metal* book on slick paper; and the Corben volume on *very* slick paper. (*Very* slick paper should carry a rectangle that reads, "Warning: the Surface General has determined that this work should not be perused in direct sunlight or with sweaty palms.")

Color in the graphic novel is several shades above that in comics, simply because the artists have many more variants at their disposal; coloring is limited only by the colorists. That of *The Silver Surfer*, which was done by Glynis Wein, is close to the comic norm. On the other hand, *Neverwhere*, with its air-brush hues, is a rainbow between two covers.

An aside: because of their book form, graphic novels naturally sit more prettily on the shelf than do comics. Of course, so does virtually everything else...

Graphic novel artwork is extremely eye-pleasing. The artist who creates a graphic novel is unburdened by burgeoning deadlines and slavering editors; consequently, he has more time to make the work something special. Also, unlike overground artists, the graphic novel artist will in all probability embellish his own pencil art, thereby eliminating the possibility of an inker misinterpreting what is before him. Or, if the penciller is disinclined to play a dual role, a talented inker will likely handle the embellishment--as, for example, Sinnott on Kirby's *Surfer* illustrations.

Graphic novels usually contain what is commonly referred to as "mature" subject matter. This does not necessarily mean it is matter maturely or (immaturely) *handled*.

For example, virtually all of the characters in *Neverwhere* are partially or totally nude. This nudity is not "shocking" but neither is it integral to the story--Corben is not analyzing the relationship of sex to violence as Philip Jose Farmer does in *A Feast Unknown*. The nudity is extraneous. (In David's place, one would feel more than slightly unnerved to suddenly discover himself unclothed--not to mention in a strange body. Most would dive for the nearest fig tree. But then, maybe David was secretly a nudist...)

Alien contains several of those naughty,nasty words which one never will find in a Marvel or DC comic. These same words, of course, can now be heard in most elementary schools. Secondly, herein one can find several scenes of graphic violence--notably the scene wherein the alien bursts from Kane's chest. It is quite revolting--but necessary to the book's horrific pace. Unfortunately, the alien's existence and motivations are never revealed. Like a Late Show werewolf, the alien is simply a terrifying berserk force.

No, Virginia, graphic novels are not necessarily more mature than comics. They are only vaguely rooted in subjects of import. The field is young, however, and great things might yet loom on the horizon.

So might raunchy things, though. For example, a Frank Thorne serial, which will soon be novelized, is presently running in Warren's *1984*. The protagonist--"Ghita"--is basically Red Sonja. A recent installment featured her having an erotic interlude with a sword. Boy, will that send the etymologists!

Incidentally, when seeking the graphic novel, one should be prepared to pay. Of the aforementioned novels, prices run from $3.95 (*Alien*) to $7.95 (*Neverwhere*). But then, to spread fish eggs on Saltines, caviar prices must be paid.

Don McGregor

(*continued from page 35*) There is no place, for instance, for "Mourning Prey." That *that* book exists at all still stuns me when I see it. Under the system that operates now, with all its checks and counter-checks, it would be impossible. Plots must be submitted first for approval. Anything as enigmatic as the plotline for "Mourning Prey" would be singled out for further inspection. There is a committee of people these days to rule on what appears. The final script is scrutinized and redone before it is lettered.

Even the people in production capacity can pass judgment on a book. One person redrew a panel in a Black Panther book so that a character appeared to "moon" the audience. I was infuriated. "I don't give a goddamn what you do in your book, but don't mess around with mine! I have to live with those books, you don't!" That attitude doesn't set well up there. They think you're a prima-donna.

You can try to be rational with them, but it seldom works. They just see it as an argument and trouble. Recently someone stated that none of my books ever sold. Well that's bullshit! And a rash and ugly thing to say, that could affect your chance to work in this business. First of all, I doubt that Warren Magazines were ever hurt or benefited, one way or the other, by my presence; and I'm sure that Marvel Comics never kept the Panther or Killraven around for three years for Don McGregor. My first prose book, *Dragonflame*, sold out two editions for Fictioneer Books, and *Sabre*, for Eclipse Enterprises, has almost gone through two printings as well, with the likelihood of a third printing in 1980. Ask them if the books made money for them.

If I had wanted to I could have tried for the mainstream books, could have obeyed all the edicts, played the percentages, joined the cliques...except, no credit due here, I just don't know how to do that and never wanted to. I'd like to give the readers the best I have.

If you're handling a mainstream book you cannot alter the status quo, especially with all the television and movie interest in the characters these days. ("*Only Way*" *continued to page 43*)

JACK KIRBY MASTERWORKS ($10.00, 56 pgs.) published by Privateer Press, 313 East 85th Street, Apt. 3-A, New York, NY 10028.

MEN, MAIDEN AND MYTHS ($12.00, 6 plates) published by Schanes and Schanes, Box 99217, San Diego, CA 92109.

MARVELOUS FRUITS AND VEGGIES, ($1.25, $2.50 hand color, 4 plates) published by Richard Bruning, 409 S. Livingston, Madison, WI 53073.

Three portfolios found their way to the reviewer's desk at the appropriate time during the production of this issue to warrant an examination. They cover a range of concerns but each deserves at least some recognition.

Privateer Press publishes the largest of the three, entitled *Jack Kirby Masterworks*. The fifty-six (11¼ x 16) page, wraparound portfolio contains a broad sample of unpublished Jack Kirby artwork from different portions of his career. Its ten-dollar price tag does not make the portfolio a bargain to any extent but the price is nevertheless justifiable for a product that has its strengths and weaknesses.

None of the art in *Jack Kirby Masterworks* can be considered the comic creator's masterwork. In fact, the publishers cull much of it from discarded pages and covers, obscure comic strips, and illustrations drawn for sick friends. Two drawings, a "Toys for Tots" campaign ad and the letterhead for Marvelmania stationary, reprint easily accessible material. Fortunately, however, most of the never-before- seen artwork was not discarded as inferior, although a few pages obviously were. Instead, Privateer Press offers glimpses of *Jimmy Olsen* and *Fantastic Four* covers so striking as to make one wonder why Kirby thought they had to be re-done at all. One page reproduces a sketch for the cover of "a proposed *New Gods* tabloid comic" with the title "Armagetto: The Last Battle of the New Gods!" If the publishers of the portfolio had opted to print more material from the likes of this endeavor (which, in his blurb at the top of the page, Kirby calls "The greatest comic ever written!!!") then this publication most likely could have been considered much more a compilation of masterworks.

Included also in the pages of *Jack Kirby Masterworks* are tastes of Kirby inked by such talents as Walt Simonson, Wally Wood and Frank Giacoia. The contrasting and complementary styles of Simonson and Kirby appear in full color on the front cover. Simonson affects Kirby in much the same way Barry Smith did in 1976's *Captain America's Bicentennial Battles*; he adds a grace and smoothness rarely seen in Kirby art. A different illustration from the same team is also available from Privateer Press in the form of a color 16 x 23½ poster priced at $2.50. A comic strip called *Surf Hunter* pairs Wood with Kirby resulting in a more controlled Kirby illustration or a more dynamic Wood rendering, depending on one's perspective.

The quality of reproduction also serves as a plus for this portfolio. In many cases, wash strokes usually lost in the printing process can be distinguished clearly. Many of the pencil sketches would have been hopelessly impaired if Privateer Press had tried to cut expenses with their printing cost. To their credit, the publishers were faithful first to the art, last to profit.

The major problem with *Jack Kirby Masterworks* stems from its lack of organization. Unlike the fanzine *Kirby*, published in November, 1973 by the Museum of Cartoon Art, which provided a detailed overview and sampling of Kirby in a much smaller format, this portfolio contains only some lengthy and rather inane remarks by Mark Evanier. The writing does offer a few illuminations but it is poorly done and tacked on at the beginning with little regard for layout. Many pictures taken from unknown work, such as "The Visitor on Highway Six" and "Encounter in the Swamps," are offered without any explanation as to their intent or where they may eventually appear in completed form. One page in the publication is left totally blank.

Privateer Press has not produced a must for Kirby fans. *Jack Kirby Masterworks* contains many things Kirby afficionados would appreciate greatly but ultimately the portfolio fails because of its haphazard layout and the fact that it raises more questions with regard to Jack Kirby than it offers anything new or different.

The next portfolio comes by way of sample copy and luckily so. It is lavishly produced and beautifully rendered but its exorbitant cost ($12.00) precludes its purchase for all but the most affluent critics and most ardent Nestor Redondo fans. Had the publishers, Schanes and Schanes, not sent the sample, Redondo's *Men, Maiden and Myths* would have gone overlooked.

Men, Maiden and Myths typifies the portfolio phenomenon in every way. The production has a limited print-run of 1000 copies, all numbered and signed by the artist. The paper stock and reproduction quality are of the highest calibre and the format is a neat, presentable package of six loose, 11 x 16½ pages (plates), inside a thicker stock cover, itself a beautiful illustration. The artist isolates a theme, in this case men and women in mythology, and concentrates his efforts on creating more intricate, detailed pictures than usually allowed by a comics story. Whether this approach offers more in terms of esthetic achievement in comics is quite debatable but portfolios like this should find some small place in people's collections.

Of the Redondo brothers, Nestor Redondo stands out as the most talented stylist. His bold yet flowing and lucid brush strokes are singularly refreshing among artists whose work dominates the black and white medium. In *Men, Maiden and Myths*, the viewer gets a close-up look at precision, painstakingly delineated Nestor Redondo artwork. Compared to 1975's *The Bible* (DC's *Limited Collectors' Edition* C-36), the detail in this portfolio is almost but not quite over-indulgent. As in *The Bible*, however, Redondo does not neglect the grandiose, epic qualities of his subject matter. The characters depicted in *Men, Maiden and Myths* stand out as majestically as the legends they represent.

The myths represented come from legends and cultures vastly different from each other, unified mostly by their implied or explicit sexuality. The sexual tensions of these old myths are captured to different degrees by the various plates. The "Malakas and Maganda" plate, apparently the most tangible myth for Redondo, is particularly well done while "Odysseus and Circe," the low point of the collection, seems hurriedly sketched with little attention to detail or design, hardly worthy of a place in the portfolio. The artist's attention to luxuriant background particulars offsets the emotionless expressions given some of the mythological figures.

Unlike a comics story, portfolios depend entirely on the artist's drawing ability but only sporadically can this, putting all the proverbial eggs in one basket, succeed. As can be seen in Jim Starlin's *Insanity*, the portfolio approach can deprive an artist of his potency as a talent by taking away his or her narrative and sequential technique. With *Men, Maiden and Myths*, however, Nestor Redondo achieves a clever balance; by choosing the men and women of myth, he evokes a kind of storytelling while emphasizing and exploiting his own unquestionable ability to draw well.

Finally, a puny, punny little contribution by Richard Bruning remains to

be acknowledged in the portfolio perusal for this issue. Like the Schanes and Schanes product, it is signed and numbered with several plates of high quality paper and an enveloping, illustrated cover. Bruning's *Marvelous Fruits & Veggies Portfolio* only costs $1.25, $2.50 for a hand colored copy. Of course, the four plates only measure 5 x 5½.

Marvelous Fruits & Veggies depicts Marvel superheroes as they would look if they were grocery items. True, it could be asserted that many Marvel characters are already a bit fruit and that vegetables only *work* for the company but Bruning resists any temptation for heavy satire. Captain Avocado, the Inedible Yulk, Peardevil and the Amazing Stringbean Man are really just cute, Hembeck/Hanley types of illustrations. Bruning's talent as a colorist matches his cartooning ability so the hand color job is worth the extra money. The artist stretches a bit to make some of his connections (the Amazing String-bean Man?) but his lighthearted caricatures raise a wry chuckle if only for the possibilities they open. Coming readily to the imagination; a Micronuts portfolio featuring Commander Artichoke Cann, Buttertron, Marionut and Baron Cornmeal or one with Luke Cauli, Flower Man and Oregano Fist.

The price of *Marvelous Fruits & Veggies* (dedicated,by the way, to "Vootie") buys more important items than four cartoons from the Merry Marvel Mulching Society but Bruning can not be faulted for his sense of humor, his drawing skill or the professionalism of his package. Hopefully, Bruning will find some place, either in fan circles or the professional market, to demonstrate his talent further.

IN-BETWEENA 4 (50¢, 16 pgs.) published by Bill-Dale Marcinko, RPO 5009, CN 5063 Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

In-Betweena 4, December, 1979, reminds the fanzine buying public once again of the unmitigated, reprehensible nonsense sometimes published under the guise of fan journalism. *In-Betweena* is "the Newsletter Between Issues of *AFTA*," a sloppy, childish and poorly produced amateur magazine published by someone named Bill-Dale Marcinko.

Marcinko's name is quite important to *In-Betweena* and its mother publication *AFTA*. Indeed, it figures quite prominently in the latter's cover logo. Both deal primarily with Marcinko: not only his name but details of his sex life, his neuroses, his tepid philosophy, his dream of being at the center of the "protest movements of the 80's," and his half-considered opinions. The introductory editorial of *In-Betweena* 4 explores Marcinko's summer romance in which such profundities as "I think that love should rip through life like a meteor" and "I wish people would stop worrying about trust, about patience" are reaffirmed in Marcinko's mind while he laments that in "relationships" he always ends up "frustrated and disappointed." As with much of what Marcinko writes, each paragraph (almost every sentence, in fact) begins with the word "I." Although *AFTA* feigns to be a resurrection of Marcinko's bizarre conception of sixties "underground" publications ("like *Rolling Stone*") it actually stands as the ultimate monument to the Me decade: a magazine not only devoted to one individual's shallowness (science fiction fans apparently do that frequently) but one with contributors and supporters.

Of course, only this last fact makes *AFTA* or *In-Betweena* worthy of any attention at all. The magazine is already thousands of dollars in debt (how else could such a project continue to produce issues?) while Marcinko plans to invest more money in T-shirts with the *AFTA* logo and lavish production on his next issue so AFTA Press should soon pass into oblivion. Some, however, have mistaken Marcinko's enthusiasm about himself for a genuine interest in the various popular media that *AFTA* pretends to examine and have greeted publications from *AFTA* Press warmly. *RBCC* called *AFTA* a real "fan's" fanzine, an assertion which again suggest a parallel with science fiction "faandom." *In-Betweena* 4 reprints a positive review of Marcinko's publication which appeared in *New Magazine Review*, calling it "subjective, self-honest, youthful." This is all perpetuated by the inseparability of *AFTA* from its publisher's name. In even mentioning the magazine (*Bill-Dale Marcinko's AFTA*) one sounds like he or she knows him personally.

Obviously, this fits into Marcinko's

CARTOONIVERSE

By Bill Lewis

First of all, one fact concerning Saturday morning cartoons schedules should be kept in mind; these programs are *not* produced for us! Those wondrous watchdogs from the P.T.A. and the A.C.T. (Action for Children's Television) have put sufficient pressure on the networks to keep these shows as anti-septic and bland as possible so as not to corrupt the minds of the intended audience, namely children. Gone are programs such as *Bullwinkle*, *Beany and Cecil*, and *George of the Jungle*, which both kids and adults could enjoy. The networks in response to this, plus the need to provide sufficient filler material between commercials, have hit upon a sure-fire solution by sticking with established characters, albeit in somewhat watered down form.

Also, it should not be forgotten that while to older viewers bringing back characters such as Casper, Flash Gordon, Mighty Mouse and Popeye may seem the height of nostalgia, their sons and daughters are seeing them for the first time. This is of great help to the animators spared the time and expense of designing characters, developing voices or even composing new theme songs. All of this has been provided. Why do the networks not simply rerun the original cartoons? The answer is that the old cartoons are not acceptable to the aforementioned watchdogs. Popeye's clenched fists or Mighty Mouse's bouts with Oil Can Harry are not deemed proper viewing for Junior. (He'll just have to wait till primetime like everybody else.)

Another consideration is that many animation houses, the creators of these ersatz characters, have shut down. Thus, Casper and Popeye, the mainstays of the Fleisher-Famous-Paramount studios are in the hands (clutches) of Hanna-Barbera, Mighty Mouse and Heckle and Jeckle of Terrytoons fall under the auspices of Filmation Associates, all done in the prevailing "house" style with very little regard toward the originals.

This is also distressingly true in the handling of characters from today's comic books. The indignities foisted upon the Thing, Spider-Woman, Batman or the Justice League (one should refuse to say "Super Friends") should not be mentioned in any great detail for fear of arousing the curiosity of numbers of people. They might watch these programs and accidentally boost their ratings.

All is not gloom for the true animation buff, however. The *Bugs Bunny-Road Runner Show* is still going strong with the animation looking fresh and new, though really thirty years old. Also, independent stations across the country are showing the original Popeye, Mighty Mouse, Tom and Jerry cartoons against these cut-rate imitations with amazingly large response. But is the response really all that amazing? Perhaps if the networks realize the folly of cutting corners, the day may come when everyone can watch cartoons again without shame. It would help to remember that the children of today are not the dummies the P.T.A. think they are. Plus, the animation studios are merely doing what the networks ask. Most of their workers would undoubtedly be happier doing higher quality films.

In the meantime, when next Saturday morning comes around, why not sleep in?

Bill Lewis, the creator, writer and penciller of the Atomic Kid, began his studies in animation with Captain Ernie's Cartoon Showboat in his home town of Davenport, Iowa.

schema: *AFTA* (which stands for "ascension from the ashes," presumably the "ashes" of the sixties underground) is to be the *Rolling Stone* of the eighties with, *In-Betweena* 4 announces, a "yellow pages" which "I want to be *the* guide to fan presses and businesses"; a "family" of "faanish" fans headed by Bill-Dale Marcinko. Marcinko will surely be the first to admit that he is more interested in other people than he is in comics, books, movies, or music--the proclaimed interest of *AFTA*. All the more so if the people are interested in him and his magazine. To the extent that reviewers and readers have misread and/or supported this presumptuous attitude and the questionable value of this intent, they deserve censure.

Marcinko's actual contempt for comics and such can be gathered from *AFTA*'s subtitle--"the Magazine of Temporary Culture." He is more than willing to sell everything in his collection to gain money for his magazine. (Issues of *Whizzard* sent to him on a complimentary basis he now sells for 80¢.) That he tries to incorporate books, music, films, television *and* comics into *AFTA*'s repertoire shows he is not particularly enamored with any medium enough to think about it, research it and prepare a magazine that might edify or entertain other people with similar interests. Very few comic reviews in *AFTA* 3 extend beyond the length of a paragraph.

Friendliness, enthusiasm and even some ego-parading do add something to an amateur magazine but never can they replace worthwhile purpose, hard work, and thought. Marcinko asks none of these last three from his contributors. The only hard work involved in the production of *AFTA*, which comes out as often as any fanzine might, is the typing, certainly not the layout or the search for contributions of any importance. Apparently, *AFTA* will print anything anyone wishes to write about any subject. The result is an unbearably immature publication that does not move in any direction and is an embarrassment and an insult to fan journalists who make tremendous efforts in producing quality fanzines. Few could doubt the enthusiasm of the likes of Gary Groth or Jerry Sinkovec but the same could not be said for the tenacity or depth of insight in the productions of Bill-Dale Marcinko.

Marcinko's purpose of sharing life and mind with a family of "faanish" fans would best be reserved instead for professional counselors, relatives and tangible friends, the kind who do not need a public forum for their summer romances.

FANDOM CALENDAR 1980 ($2.50, 12 pgs.) published by Weirdo Publishing Company, 315 East Fifth Street, #4-A, New York, NY 10003

Weirdo Publishing Company has put together a number of fan art pieces in calendar form that could be recommended as much if not more than any other gimmick calendar, the likes of which seem to be becoming increasingly popular and expensive. Not too long ago country style recipes and pictures of puppies adorned calendars given away by banks for free. Today, to get a calendar with equally trivial subject matter, such as movie stills and pictures of elves, it costs at least five dollars.

Fandom Calendar 1980, at half that price, deserves at least as much attention as, for instance, *The Black Hole* calendar. Edited by Jay Zilber, *Fandom Calendar 1980* is assembled nicely and *some* of its artwork, particularly that drawn by Dave Sim, Jim Kuzee, Fred Hembeck and Brad Foster, while not exemplary of these fan artists' best, is nevertheless interesting. The historical information included on the calendar dates covers an inordinate range of data. Everything from Joan Baez' birthday to the American television debut of *The Prisoner* to the publication of the first issue of *Inside Comix* is listed. One senses that much has been left out. In a few cases, like Kurt Erichsen's wretched and unfunny cartoon, one wishes some of the art had been left out.

Still, $2.50 is not an unreasonable sum to ask for a calendar that expresses an appreciation for some of the talent in fan circles, although the effort could have been imporved by a better selection of artwork. *Fandom Calendar 1980* is better than hanging faeries from the wall but it has a long way to go to beat cute puppies for the price.

LOLLAPALOOSA 3 ($1.75, 52 pgs.) published by Mitch O'Connell, 5453 N. Lakewood, Chicago, IL 60640

Ads for Mitch O'Connell's *Lollapaloosa* 3 fail to mention that the fanzine measures only 7 x 10 inches instead of the expected 8½ x 11. They also overlook

Craig Russell

(*continued from page 16*) There is more to action than two titans knocking each other about. There is drama and tension in the dawnings of an emotional or intellectual awareness within a character --and *that* is action.

Whizzard: Then you feel there's more room for psychological conflict in comics?

Russell: I think so. We'll find that out. We're moving more toward that direction. In Hogarth's *Tarzan* books there's ferocious fights in there, but there's also long, contemplative pieces. There's not so much fist fights, but struggle. I like struggle, that's fine. I don't think there has to be constant confrontation. You should save that for when it really counts.

I don't know how far that would go in commercial comics because they marketed themselves into a corner where the only people that are looking at them are looking at them for that. So if we want to work in another way we have to find the market ourselves. I don't think work coming out of Marvel or DC, even if they wanted to, even if they backed it, just wouldn't get the people who wanted to see that sort of thing picking up the comic books on the stands. You have to find them some place else.

Whizzard: In 1976 what caused you to stop doing work for Marvel and begin inking for National?

Russell: I quit selling original work to Marvel in '76 and went out on my own which I've been doing ever since. At one time I needed money and was going to do inking for a professional company and went over to DC, because Milgrom was there. I asked him and he found work for me right away, which was very nice then. It wasn't like I had stopped working exclusviely for one company and started working exclusively for another. I stopped selling exclusively to overground comics original work.

Whizzard: Why did you return to Marvel three years later?

Russell: When I started working for Marvel again it was because of Al. Milgrom was back over at Marvel, there was that crash over at DC, and so I couldn't get any more inking work over there. At that time, Al went over to Marvel. I called him up. To me it wasn't calling Marvel comics or DC--it was calling Al Milgrom. He could be working for Harvey and I'd probably call him. (laughter) I'd end up doing *Casper*, I don't know... It means more to me to be working with someone who is pleasant and reasonable.

Whizzard: You had left before Marvel released their new contract?

Russell: Right, I'd already left so that didn't make any difference because I wasn't selling them any original work. I didn't care too much if they owned the inking; that didn't affect me too strongly. That contract was awful, just awful. It's very telling. It's honest in a way they haven't been honest before because it pretty well reveals their attitude. That attitude is awful.

Whizzard: Could you possibly consolidate your future plans?

Russell: Right now I'm working on an Elric book. Friedrich is the editor and partial publisher with Baronet Books and it will go into the bookstores rather than on the newsstand. It's going to be either sixty or ninety pages, right now we're not sure. The first story, at least, is going to be fifty-eight pages with two pages of contents. Roy Thomas is doing the adaptation from Michael Moorcock's novel.

I'm having a blast with it. It's going to be my best work yet, I'm certain of that. It has all the elements of the Dr. Strange character that I like to do with the mystic spells, the magic cities, the armies of monstrosities, elementals from other dimensions--all at the call of Elric. It's got everything in it. I'm having a lot of fun with it working with the story-telling and the breakdowns. I've wanted to work with Thomas for some time and I've admired a lot of work that he's done. I'm really very anxious to see how he brings

the fact that "the works of comic artists" included in the issue are hurried and fan-inked convention sketches, reprinted art from *The Comics Journal* and *The Comic Reader*, or O'Connell's own. O'Connell also draws his own (rather poor) Batman story and contributes an undocumented article on EC for *Lollapaloosa*. The checklists in the issue are largely swiped, typos and all, from back issues of *Whizzard* with a listing of this magazine in the indexes as the only acknowledgement. The one thing worthwhile gained from *Lollapaloosa* 3 is knowledge that the importance of an ad lies not in what is advertised but in what is not.

(Notes on Lollapaloosa 3 provided by Jerry E. Durrwachter.)

ON THE FILM FRONT

The science-fiction celluloid now being made for televison and movies ranks from stupid to superb. The *Galactica 1980* out-bogused its predecessor, but to its credit TV also aired well-done adaptations of *The Lathe of Heaven* and *The Martian Chronicles*. Disney released *Captain Nemo in Outer Space* under the title *The Black Hole* while *Star Trek, The Motion Picture* ran into criticism familiar to comic fans. The film is subtle, profound and technically magnificent but has been lambasted for its "pop" television roots. A *Time* critic called fans of the series "half-educated" and proceeded to demonstrate that he did not pay attention to the movie at all. So it goes...

Don McGregor

(from pg. 39) interest in the characters these days. The books have become secondary. Therefore, books like *Superman*, and Marvel's version of *Superman*, *Spiderman* must stagnate. It's unfortunate.

I must tell you that I was criticized for not having enough villains in the books. (laughter) Now, I said, "I can't understand what you're talking about. If you're telling me that Atalon or the Sacrificer or Skar aren't villains then I don't know what a villain is." But I really know what they wanted. They wanted the Sandman in there. They wanted to use old Stan Lee villains. But I didn't want to do that. For better or worse I wanted to produce my own characters. I think I got in more trouble for that aspect of the business than any sexual matters or racial themes or contemporary criticisms that might have been included in the books.

Whizzard: Were those criticisms raised from readers or from the editorial staff?

McGregor: No, the readers were always supportive and enthusiastic, ninety-five percent of the time, especially many of the long-time Marvel readers. Along with Craig they gave me the guts to go on with it more than once.

Yet I was even criticized for the mail. It was felt that if a book received too many typewritten letters that it was doomed not to sell.

Whizzard: Your audience was too literate?

McGregor: They felt that the readers who wrote the long, indepth, analytic letters were. I would think that Killraven had some appeal for the college audience. I must mention how the books are distributed. The higher-print-run books, like *Spiderman*, goes everywhere: to college campuses, supermarkets, wherever comics are sold. That book is going to be getting out there. A lower print-run book like Killraven makes the 7-11 stores. If they were using an intelligent marketing approach (and it could have changed since I was there) they would have made sure that the book got onto the campuses where it might have more of an audience. I can't imagine any college readers being turned on to *Spiderman* these days. It has denigrated down to seven and eight year olds. Now, there should be books, plenty of them, for that age group, books for every age group. It's sad to see that *Spiderman* which was once a book somewhat reflective of personal identity should be reduced to a run-of-the-mill book that no longer relates to anything. I think there's room in comics for everything! Romance! Westerns! Funny animals! Science fiction! I just wish there were more good material in all areas.

Whizzard: Prior to its cancellation, what plans did you have for the Killraven series?

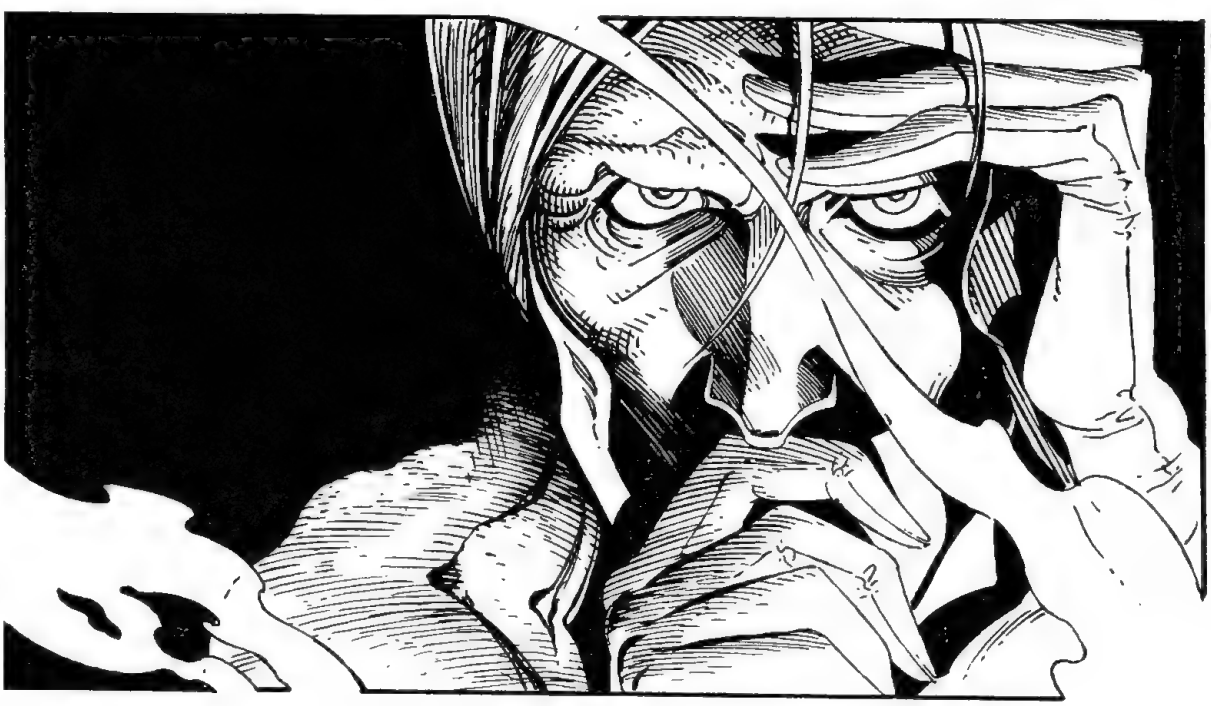
McGregor: Eventually they would reach Yellowstone Park where they would meet his brother. Then I planned to take the series to its next step; they would finally reach Mars. I guess I had another two years worth of books in progress, in the form of vague plotline stages.

I'm sorry that Craig and I never had a chance to make some of them a reality, but the hopes are that sometime in the near future we will work on a new project, one I think that is very intriguing. Again, none of the Killraven work would have been possible without the talent and verve and beauty of Craig Russell's work. It continues to change and stimulate. The series was definately heading toward certain areas and certain revelations that it's just unfortunate we never had a chance to do.

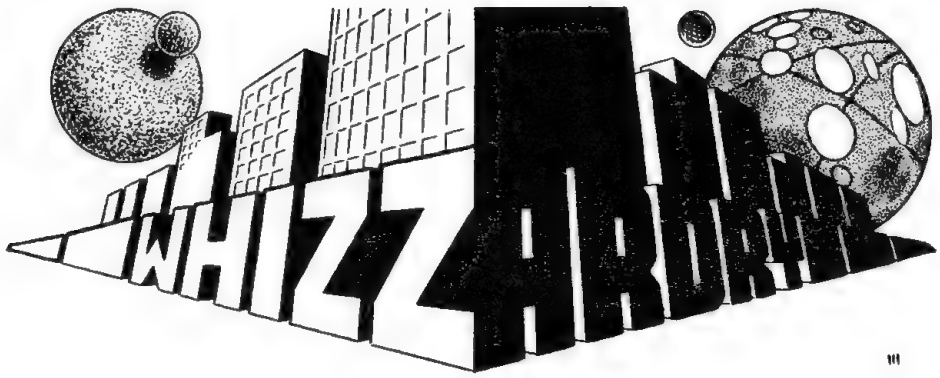
it off.

It won't be released until spring of 1981. It's going to take a lot of work because it's very detailed. Of course, I'm getting a little carried away with it, too. I'm doing maybe two pages a week. That's not counting the coloring, which will be done later.

The Schanes and Schanes portfolio which is called *The Curse of the Ring* will be out soon. An eight page adaptation of Wagner's *Seigfried*, originally done for the fifth issue of *Imagine*, which was cancelled, should be in the first or second issue of *Epic Illustrated*. It's the sequence of the fight between Seigfried and the dragon. Then I'm working on Elric. The first two chapters will be in the third and fourth issue of *Epic*. Everything is just waiting to come out.



(a) 1980 P. Craig Russell



Send all comments to: Whizzard, 5730 Chatport Road, Saint Louis, MO 63129. Unless otherwise requested, all letters received are subject to print.

INTERVIEWS

Steve Skeates
180 North Main
Alfred, Ny 14802

The interview with Jim was superb. It's good to hear that at least one old friend is still his own man, hasn't sold out and become a company drone like many of my other contemporaries have. Of course (and, for the readers, unfortunately), this means we won't be seeing very much of Starlin's comic book work in the near future.But then again, and for many of the same reasons, you won't be seeing much of my work either. (Whether or not the latter is unfortunate is, however, another question entirely.)

Jon Bogdan
1413 Confederate Ave
Richmond, VA 23227

The Starlin interview in #12 was rivetting! I had lost track of the guild since first hearing about it at "Creation" in May 1978. I was saddened and distressed to hear what has become of this potentially noble and life-saving effort. The trouble is that exploitation or not, there are those of us out here who are *cursed* with the *undeniable* drive to do mainstream comics. It frightens me to know that I will one day have to work under these conditions, with absolutely no protection or recourse. (Incidentally, is there *anyone* out there who can help gullible fools like myself keep abreast of the vile politics of the business side of comics? Also, is there any way other fans and I can help promote a movement like the guild?) *(6/10/79)*

Ken Meyer, jr.
1301E 41st, Rm. 615
Ogden, UT 84403

Hey, *Whizzard* #12 was quite an issue! Yours is the only 'zine around that has such good reading content issue after issue. The interviews are what I wait for. You always seem to second guess me on my next request for interviewing.

My only complaint this issue was the brevity of the Golden feature. I feel he's one of the most exciting new artists to come along in quite awhile. And he says he *simplifies* his work for comics? I'd love to see him at his best, then!

Starlin is pretty cynical about the industry, isn't he? Hmmm...I hope this isn't a trend of some sort. Nasser's moment of glory in the pages of *Whizzard* was too short to even mention. Walt's, however, was beautiful! Kind of along the lines of Austin's last issue. Here we have a basically nice guy, who works in comics and doesn't hate the industry he works for! Amazing! I must say I like his older stuff much more than the recent formula comic work I see, but his explanation of this seemed sensible and honest. *(5/30/79)*

Richard Morrissey
55 Claudette Circle
Framingham, MA 01701

Some fans I know aren't terribly fond of interviews, but I like them, and this issue took my breath away --four interviews with four of the up-and-coming artists of the day, complete with checklists!

They were all interesting interviews, and the Manhunter article was a good companion piece. (Personally, I'm just as glad *Dynamic Classics* ran only one issue; the Manhunter series certainly deserves reprinting, but it ought to be in a single volume, preferably a tabloid.) Unlike the other three, Nasser isn't exactly one of my favorite artists --like Mike Grell, he relies far too much on Neal Adams swipes--but a few of his stories (especially the lead in the *Batman Annual*) have shown some promise that he might at least be adding some more influences. After all, Marshall Rogers was (as you correctly pointed out) little more than an inferior Simonson imitation in his first *Detective* story, the one Bob Rozakis wrote--but once he started Englehart's series, he'd added enough Sprang influence, and other influences, to be one of the best artists Batman had seen in years. If only you'd interviewed him, too, you really would have had all the best artistic newcomers under one cover--but I suppose you can't do everything.

If there's one other comment I might make about fan interviews in general, it does seem rather unfortunate that most fanzines seem to focus largely on the current creative personnel to the exclusion of most others. The only professionals who've been inactive in recent years that I've seen interviewed to any extent have been those who've deliberately kept themselves in the fannish eye, such as Jim Steranko, Stan Lee, and Neal Adams...Many fanzines almost make it appear that comic books began in 1970 from the amount of discussion they give to earlier decades...I'd very much like to see a good interview with Jerry Siegel or Arnold Drake or Bill Woolfolk or Bob Kanigher, because many of these people were around firsthand when some of the ideas and characters we now take for granted were first conceived. And, quite aside from that, these people won't be around for nearly as long as the Simonsons and Starlins will be--there are already a number of people of their generaiton, such as Edmond Hamilton, Bill Finger, and Otto Binder, who are forever unavailable. (And I've certainly made my prejudices in favor of writers evident here, but there are a good many artists who deserve to be interviewed, too --a great many fans who think *Prince Ra-Man* and *Brother Power, the Geek* are examples of the best respective work of Mort Meskin and Joe Simon would be very surprised to read interviews with those artists. And in some ways so, I'm sure, would I.) *(7/23/79)*

INDEXES

Gene Girardier
2834 Burgess Avenue
Maplewood MO 63143

Just a line to let you know I really enjoyed the latest issue of *Whizzard*, especially the Golden interview. Here's a little more information on the Golden index:

House of Mystery #259, 10 pages, "Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow," writer Manak & Michelinie, artist Mike Golden *(3/78)*

Batman #303, 8 pages, "If Justice Be Served," writer Dennis O'Neil, artists Mike Golden and Jack Abel

Like I said, I really enjoyed your fanzine and can tell a lot of work and love went into it. *(5/12/79)*

Richard Morrissey
. . . . . .

You did miss one interesting Simonson item on his checklist, albiet one for a very limited-circulation publication called *CAPA-alpha*, the amateur press association of which I'm the current central mailer. It included a Simonson page in mailing 119, September 1974. It originally appeared as the cover of a Barks reprint index by *K-a* member Kim Weston. (Kim was apparently a good friend of Walt's in his fan days, and in all liklihood still is. He also ran *Starslammers* through the apa while it was coming out.)

Dafydd Neal Dyar
PSC Box 364
APO, NY 09121

By the way: Simonson produced a series of Enterprise/Romulan ship sketches for Bjo Trimble's *Star Trek Concordance* which was not mentioned in your checklist. This was the original Concordance, mind you, not the Ballantine trade paperback.

Gary Johannigmeir
1542 Lindell
Granite City, IL
62040

One of my main complaints about the issue is the way the indexes seemed to be haphazardly "thrown" in. Look at how the Starlin and Nasser indexes merged. If you read by columns the Nasser index goes right into the Starlin one. The indexes (with the exception of the Starlin one) do not directly follow the interviews. Also it is infuriating how the indexes are broken up. My opinion of an index is to give a capsule guide to an artist, a guide that is all in one piece. Clarity is the key. If they do not fit quite well after the interview, why not place them all in a special index section? *(12/18/79)*

Steve Skeates
. . . . . .

Whizzard gave me a nostalgic kick or two. Of course I remembered the stories I wrote for Marvel and D.C. which were mentioned in the Starlin and Nasser checklists, but I had forgotten all about the existence of that piece Skrenes, Starlin, Milgrom and I did for the Lopez *Harpoon*. Brought back some fine memories.

Anyway, keep up the good work.

Hey, the Atomic Kid had nice professional looking art and a fun story to boot. Hold onto him!

ARTWORK

Alan Hunter
1186 Christchurch Rd.
Boscombe East
Bournemouth, Dorset
BH7 6DY England

Many thanks for the grand and glorious issue 12 of *Whizzard*. It was great reading, well presented and well illustrated. There was plenty to get into and although some of the items appealed to me more than others, there was nothing I actually disliked.

The art was plentiful and mostly of a high standard. A special bonus this time were the two inside cover tone paintings which really added quality to the magazine. And it must have been a mistake to print the Ed.Mantels full-pager on the back of the questionnaire--surely nobody would send it in because they did not want to part with such impressive art.

On the whole, a great issue, and I thank you for the pleasure it gave me.

Ken Meyer, jr.
. . . . . .

Some of the art in this issue was very nice. Of course, the pros' work was great, especially the Starlin frontispiece. As far as fan work goes, I believe Ed.Mantels is the best you have, he's consistently good in art and lettering. His logos (Rick's too) were all well done. The insert by Ed was beautiful, as was his backcover with Terry Austin. Hunter has a nice clean style, reminiscent of Gary Kato. The Atomic Kid is amusing but I think it is a waste of space.

Richard Gagnon
P.O. Box 283
Kenvil, NJ 07847

I'd like to see the Atomic Kid dropped, particularly if you wish to make *Whizzard* an interview 'zine --which I'd wholeheartedly support. It has a "cutesy" humor I've never been fond of. What I find weird is that, in some spots, like page 26, Bill seems to be trying to be serious. Artwise, it's okay, nothing spectacular, but up to par with most fan strips. Backgrounds are sparce. *(6/4/79)*

Tom Olander
Box 3
SF-00251 Helsinki 25/Finland

Your layout is superb, and you have a good relationship between text and pictures. Much of the art is excellent, especially most of the small-size pictures.

I do not like the Atomic Kid. By my opinion it's too much in ideas like a copy of Superman. There are also many other Superman-copies in other publications that I dislike. Secondly, the Atomic Kid is poor art. Nevertheless, it's a fact that an artist must make poor arts before he can make good arts. Nobody can make a good job without training and Bill Lewis is on his way. (If there is something in this letter that is hard to understand for you, it depends on my poor English knowledges.) *(9/13/79)*

William Denholm III
184 Centre St Apt #5
Mountain View, CA
94041

I collect comics and "quality" fanzines. I don't know where *Whizzard* has been hiding but I am glad I finally found it. Overall reaction: Awe (how did he do it?)

Backcover, I loved it but, I know a thing or two about guns (yes *blush* I am a gun buff) and one problem with them is that they are heavy. Those big thick belts are really necessary if you are going to carry two or three pounds comfortably for any length of time. (I know, I know, artistic license, but my point is still valid.)

Your 'zine reminds me of something we used to kick around when I was a student. How do you grade a class of nothing but 'A' students on a curve? *(5/13/79)*

WHIZZARD QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

FAVORITE INTERVIEW: *Jim Starlin (62.5%) Michael Golden (22.5%), Walt Simonson (12.5%).*

FAVORITE ARTICLE: *"Silver Surfer: Kirby's Exposition of Power" (30%), "Tarnish on the Silver Age" (25%), no opinion (15%).*

FAVORITE PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: *Jim Starlin (50%), Walt Simonson (20%), no opinion (30%).*

FAVORITE NON-PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: *J.K. Potter (25%), Ed.Mantels (20%), Alex Bialy (12.5%), no opinion (30%).*

FAVORITE WRITER: *Jerry Durrwachter (22.5%), Michael McFadden (15%), Marty Klug (15%), no opinion (35%).*

SHOULD *WHIZZARD* PUBLISH: *(yes/no)*

convention news or reports	*Y 65% N 35%*
fiction or poetry	*Y 45% N 55%*
fan/prozine review column	*Y 65% N 30%*
a comicstrip each issue	*Y 70% N 30%*
the Atomic Kid comicstrip	*Y 65% N 25%*
solicited advertisement	*Y 50% N 25%*
info. on St. Louis events	*Y 40% N 35%*

POTPOURRI

Gary Johannigmeir
. . . . . .

One thing I did particularly enjoy was the letter from Thor. I don't know if that kind of letter deserves to be printed, but fanatics in their own way are entertaining. But again, it is somewhat depressing to realize how far they've gone into their world. *(12/18/79)*

Dafydd Neal Dyar
. . . . . .

I liked everything in *Whizzard* #12 except the obituary of the piglet. Sorry to hear it. Gee, that Sore fella sounded Mighty Thor. Please don't get the impression that all disc jockeys are ill-mannered as he, however. Some of us are downright human.

How is it you've now been reduced to a sound effect in the Atomic Kid? (page 23, panel 4) First you're grafitti in a ghetto in *X-Men*, now you're background noise in the Atomic Kid. Oh well, at least you get recognition.

Also the "Exc-u-u-use Me-e-e!" did not originate with either Steve Martin *or* Tom Hof. It was first used by Lynyrd Skynyrd on "Gimme Three Steps" on their first LP back in 1972...) *(5/15/79)*

Walt Jaschek
1322-C McCutcheon
St. Louis, MO 63144

At last I can identify with sappy old Aunt Hildy---everybody knows her. She's the one who waddles in from Chicago, or North Bend, or wherever, and reeking of Woolworth's perfume, hugs all the nieces and nephews. "My, my," she'll ooze. "How you've grown!"

I just finished *Whizzard* #12.

My, my. How you've grown.

Aunt Hildy's perspective, of course, is blunted by distance. Development which seems natural to everyone else is startling and abrupt when judged after absence. I recall *Whizzard* as an eager youth but suddenly--though of course it probably wasn't suddenly at all--it is a mature and well-rounded publication, an impressive product. I'm glad it exists, and I'm glad to see it coming out of St. Louis.

Hildy bore a tattered bag of cheap but amusing gifts. All I can muster is a check, which should be applied to a subscription. I'd rather not stay away so long this time. You deserve support.

I'm motivated to comment about the contents of *Whizzard* #12, but I would prefer to do it at length, and this letter has a self-imposed perimeter of one page to insure that it gets to you before I leave town....If I tried to make it short, spare comments, I'd be doing the issue an injustice.

(But allow me an economic gush over Mike McFadden's wry recollections. I was surprised to see Mike in your pages, and delighted. I've been out of touch with him--tell him I thought his essay was the best fanzine writing I've seen from him. Also tell him the St. Louis chapter of the Stone Boy Fan Club will soon be bringing a libel suit against him.)

I'm looking forward to future issues; that I can say with uncommon sincerity. Behave yourself--you never know when Aunt Hildy might drop in. Again.

Jon Bogdan
. . . . .

Migod! I just read *Whizzard* for the first time and I'm too breathless to organize my comments. This is a *sensational* 'zine! It's precisely the sort of thing I'd been looking for.

Marty, I just can't find enough words to praise *Whizzard*. I enjoyed every article, interview and feature. Most of the writing and art was *superb*, and nothing dropped below plain "good". Though more important, the 'zine seems to have a certain feel--an appealing spirit of its own. Whether this comes from the quality of your contributors or editorial direction, I don't know. Whatever the case--I'm hooked. I only wish I had discovered *Whizzard* earlier.

Small Talk...

(from page 3) the comic industry; one should not hastily underestimate the next forty with neither nostalgic zeal nor modern cynicism.

This issue focuses on several independent comic projects currently being produced with an overview of their creator's past accomplishments. Work by Marshall Rogers on *Detective Comics*, Steve Gerber on *Howard the Duck*, and Don McGregor and Craig Russell on *Amazing Adventures* are highly regarded in fan circles and their latest books are equally promising. In a rare interview Tim Conrad discusses his three years of work adapting Robert E. Howard's sword-and-sorcery novel *Almuric* for an upcoming series in *Epic Illustrated*. Many of the interviews are also accompanied by extensive indexes and never-before-published drawings from upcoming projects.

It's puzzling why many reporters have an apparent passion for exploiting the eccentricities of comic collectors. Yet, are comic enthusiasts any more eccentric than people who spend hundreds of dollars for rare coins, old stamps, or music memorabilia? A person can apparently collect comics with social approval for financial reasons--provided one doesn't read them. A favorite article of mine interviews a college alumni who boasts, "I read every comic I buy," and then reveals that "Robert E. Howard was the original artist of the Conan Comics ....his comics are one of the most expensive comics today." ("Comics and Cans Make Two Good Investments," *County News*, June 15, 1977). Indeed, such a book should be very valuable considering the comic version of *Conan the Barbarian* did not begin until 34 years after Howard died.

Reaction to *Whizzard* 12 has been overwhelmingly favorable in the letters and reviews. In "Whizzardry" Dafydd Dyar refers to the use of "Klug" as a sound effect in the Atomic Kid which, by the way, was also used in *Marvel Two-In-One* 51 (May, 1979). This issue, which features interviews with writers Steve Gerber and Don McGregor, attempts to establish greater diversity in interview subjects, a popular criticism of last issue. Future issues will also devote some attention to older comic book professionals, as suggested by Rich Morrissey, and some coverage to newspaper comic strip illustrators.

About ten weeks ago this issue consisted of nothing but expensive phone bills and 48 pages of ambition. Compared to past issues its production has been relatively quick even though it has equally suffered from Murphy's Law: a broken typewriter, winter illness, procrastinating contributors, and pressing academic committments have all conspired against its prompt release. One of the most colorful production delays was my stay in a hospital for a couple of days for some dental work. Most of the experience is only a blurred memory yet I vividly recall a nurse outside the operating room as she looked at my chart asking me, "Well, how did you hurt your hand?"

Special thanks this issue is extended to Rick Burchett, Diana Highley, and many others for their assistance, their encouragement, and their incredible ability to come through at the last moment.

Retailers interested in stocking this issue should contact New Media/Irjax, which is currently the exclusive distributor of *Whizzard*. I was somewhat stunned a few weeks ago when I received an unexpected phonecall from one of the company's representatives who casually proposed internationally distributing *Whizzard* and doubling the magazine's circulation. "Excuse me, for a minute," I thought, "while I pick my jaw up from the floor." Determined efforts will be made to increase *Whizzard*'s frequency to three issues annually compared to our current irregular schedule. Secondly, substantial qualitative improvements in appearance and contents are presently being discussed.

I have this nagging suspicion that one of these days I'm going to wake up from all of this and find I'm still eleven years old producing ten copy printruns on a library xerox machine. It's going to be a hell of a relief. At least then I won't have to repeatedly explain to certain individuals that graphic novels are more than "Doonesbury" reprints and that people over ten can still find some projects in the comics medium entertaining. *(Feb. 15, 1980)*

(c) 1980 Tim Conrad

BOURGEOIS '86